The Unesco Courier

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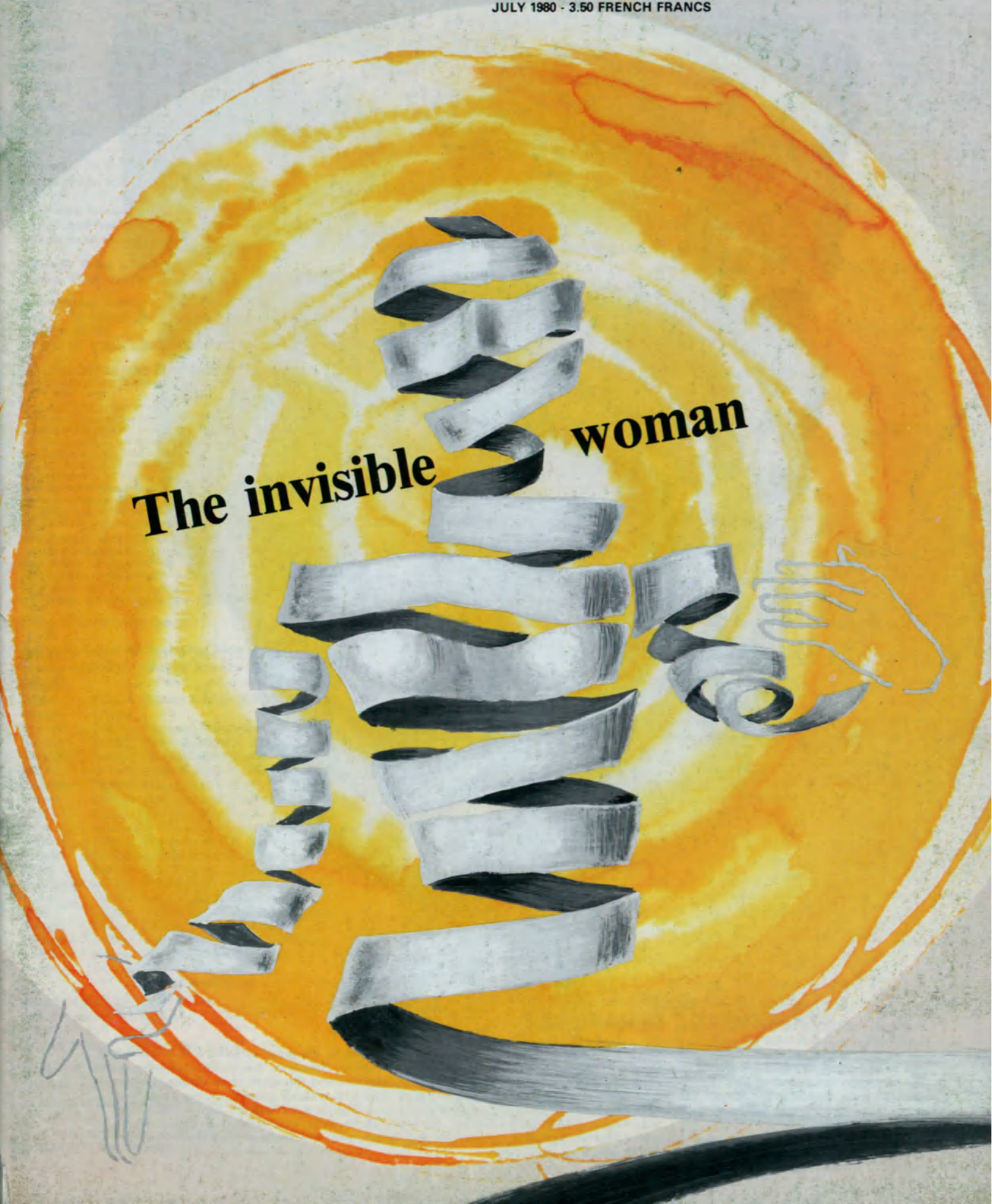
The invisible woman



TREASURES OF WORLD ART

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Cyprus

Crowned head

The art of Cyprus in ancient times was influenced by the great cultures which flourished nearby in Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and the Aegean. However, the island was never totally absorbed into the orbit of any of these civilizations and the work of its artists retained its own specific character. This carved stone head of a woman wearing a crown adorned with rosettes and tiny figures is an example of Cypriot art of the 5th century BC. Now preserved in the Nicosia Museum, the work shows how, at a time when Cyprus was under Persian dominion, Cypriot art did not become "Orientalized" but looked to the Greek world for inspiration.

Photo © Roger Viollet, Paris

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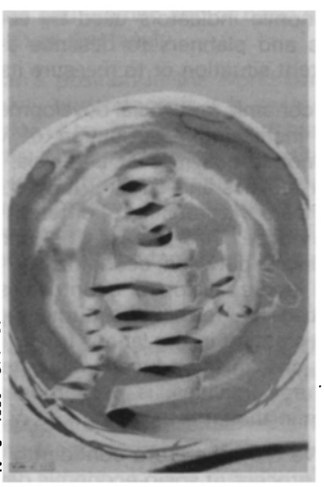

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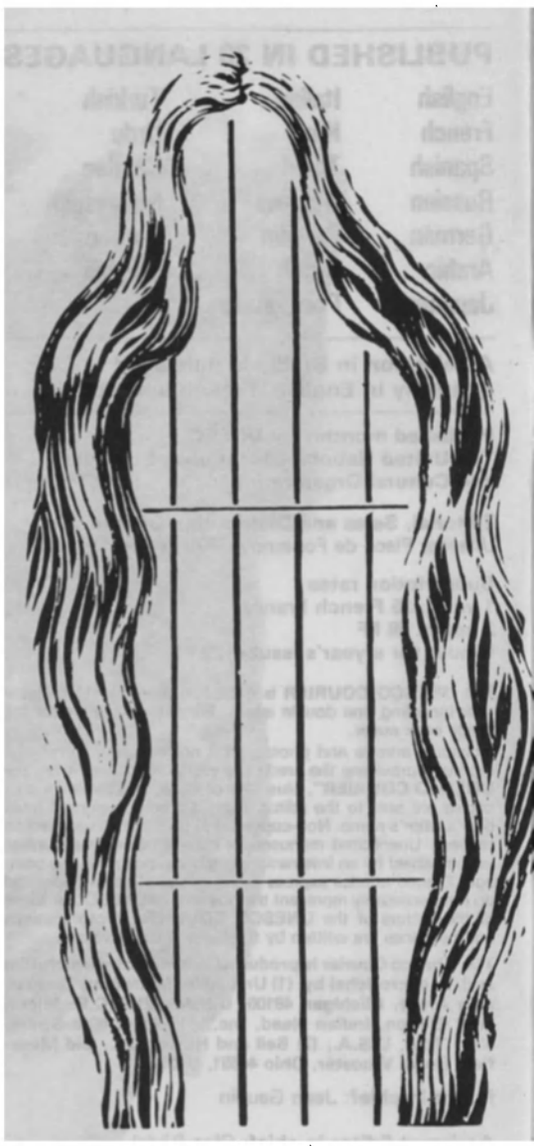
Cover

Our cover design is a symbolic representation of woman who has been rendered "invisible"—especially as a contributor to economic development, as a member of the work force, and in the social sciences—by forms of discrimination which are only now beginning to attract widespread attention.

Design © Philippe Gentil, Paris

This year, half-way through the Decade for Women proclaimed by the United Nations in 1975, women from all over the world are taking stock of their situation, notably at the World Conference of the UN Decade for Women being held in Copenhagen from 14 to 30 July. The purpose of the Conference is to evaluate the progress made in implementing the ten-year World Plan of Action for the advancement of women which was adopted by the International Women's Year Conference at Mexico City in 1975, and to establish an action programme for the second half of the Decade. Along with other international organizations Unesco has been working to fulfil those recommendations of the Plan which fall within its fields of competence; some of these Unesco initiatives have given rise to material appearing in this special issue of the *Unesco Courier*. Several of the articles published here are dominated by the presence of a figure who might be called the "invisible" woman. She may be invisible because she has been legislated out of existence by the inhuman apartheid machine; or because the economic value of her work in the home or in other unpaid activities is ignored by the various "indicators" which define the profile of her country's social and economic situation; or as a result of some other form of discrimination. However there are signs today that her situation may be changing through the efforts of the world-wide movement for women's liberation. Not only is there an intensification of research into women's status within different cultures and regions but new methods of inquiry are being developed and new questions are being asked by women social scientists who are removing the cloak of invisibility from women who have been denied their full and equal participation in social, cultural and political life.

the invisible



Engraving René Magritte from *René Magritte* by Patrick Waldberg 1965 © André de Rache, Brussels

by Rodolfo Stavenhagen

THROUGHOUT the world, in both developed and developing countries, women are the mainstay of *the hidden support economy* which allows the rest of the economy to function and which is not mentioned in national accounts, which does not appear in census reports and which is not clearly reflected in the social and economic indicators used by social scientists and planners to describe a country's current situation or to measure its changes.

Economic and social development implies the increasing participation of women in economic activities at all levels, in education, politics and culture. Indeed, when we compare the statistics of different countries, we notice that one of the principal differences between economically developed and underdeveloped countries is the fact that in the former the number of women participating in the labour force, in the professions, in the educational system, and in cultural activities. is proportionately larger than in the latter.

We may therefore confidently state that the process of socio-economic development (which is much more complex than the simple increase in industrial output or gross national product or per capita income) also means the progressive improvement of the status of women in society.

But does this mean that in those societies where such changes have not occurred, women are unproductive economically or that they are outside of the economic system? Not at all. In keeping "the home fires burning", as the saying goes, in taking care of domestic chores and, particularly, in bearing and raising children, women play a decisive role in one of the key elements of any economy: the reproduction of the labour force.

This domestic economy is in fact essential for the functioning of the economic system. Yet it is often neglected, if not completely overlooked in the analysis of economic transactions, and the women who are responsible for its operation are relegated, incredibly, to the category of non-productive household labour. It is assumed, statistically at least, that they make no contribution to the economy.

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woman

a conspiracy of silence conceals and devalues women's essential contributions to economic life

A famous British economist is reported once to have remarked that if all gentlemen were to marry their (paid) housekeepers, then the indicators would show a decrease in the participation of women in the labour force and a reduction in the national income. This merely emphasizes the fact that any indicator can be used very ambiguously and that careful thought should be given to the concepts which lie behind them.

The question then is not how can women be integrated into development, but rather how do we assess the nature and importance of the domestic economy within the total economy. It is precisely due to their role in the hidden domestic economy that women occupy the lowest ranks on the various scales of indicators of social and economic participation.

There are different and complex reasons for this, and when we ask why don't women participate in development or why do they occupy such low positions on the social scale, we are really inquiring about the nature of social institutions and relations and of cultural values. Changes in the participation rates of women in various economic and social activities (such as attending schools and universities, becoming members of the professions and so forth) sometimes actually require deep changes in a society's structure involving not only an improvement in the status of women but a transformation of the social relations between men and women and of basic institutions such as the family.

Woman's position in the world can only be properly understood if it is seen in the perspective of her relationship with man and within the context of the social institutions that determine the interactions between the sexes. Improvement in the status of women therefore implies a redefinition of traditional roles both within the family and in working life.

The situation of women in society varies from culture to culture. In traditional agricultural societies, where the division of labour between the sexes is not greatly developed, there is an essential equality between men and women, at least in the economic sphere. Where traditional subsistence agriculture becomes commercialized, more money-oriented and market-oriented, it is the men who tend to to take over the economic activities, often by becoming migrant labourers, and the situation of women tends to deteriorate. There are exceptions to this, of course, and in a number of rural societies (in Africa and the Caribbean, for example) women have taken an active part in the mercantile economy.

In general, wherever labour is remunerated it has an economic value, and therefore non-remunerated labour (such as the domestic labour of women) becomes devalued economically and thus also socially and culturally. If, in addition, the quantitative indicators designed to measure the performance of the economy neglect these facts, then it is easy to see why women are systematically said to be excluded from participation in development. Non-participation is one thing, but the relegation of women to spheres of activity which are essential to the economy but which in male-oriented societies are systematically downgraded, undervalued and discriminated against is quite another.

Yardsticks of social status

by Erwin S. Solomon

WHAT is an indicator and why do we need indicators of women's participation in socio-economic development? The simplest answer to the first part of the question is that an indicator is a measure or piece of information which *indicates* something. This may first appear as a simple truism but it is far more complex than it seems. For to indicate something implies a reason or a concern for doing so, which, in turn, implies (dare I say "indicates?") a value or goal behind the concern.

Thus, indicators, by their nature, are more than descriptive statements (although they can be used for that also) for they imply a certain dynamic approach in relation to a target or goal. Statistics are the main building blocks of indicators, and are sometimes used as simple descriptive indicators but they are not themselves indicators. One may visualize statistics as bricks and mortar and indicators as the edifice that can be built from them. Thus, the same bricks can be used to build a roadway or a wall, a temple of learning or a labyrinth.

Indicators are very often misused and can thus easily mislead. A well known economic indicator like the Gross National Product (GNP) may be used as an example. GNP (or GNP per capita) is a composite indicator reflecting, in monetary terms, the value of goods, services and trade. It is commonly misused however as an indicator of development, or even, of levels of living or of quality of life. This it is *not,* although it is certainly a part of development and quality of life itself.

Indicators, especially dynamic ones, are powerful instruments of policy analysis and of social action and nowhere is this more true than in the area of concern of improving the status of women and their participation in development.

On the analytical level, the way we describe the social situation of women is crucial to our very understanding of the true situation.

On the policy level the indicators used and the system in which they are conceived will determine the very limits of possible social action.

If, for example, we accept as an indicator of our concern with women's role in employment the commonly used statistic/indicator of the per cent of the labour force that is female we immediately limit the scope of analysis and potential action to the formal employment of women in the labour force. Under this scheme, a goal of "equality" could be expressed simply as achieving more or less a 50 per cent female labour force.

Analytical and policy relevant indicators which reflect women's role in

Photo © Bulloz, Paris, Stavenhagen Collection

employment would obviously need to be far more complete and include elements relating to the quality of women's employment, their distribution relative to men, work situations specific to women's role in the family as well as the economy, etc. Indicators would, by their very nature, be tied to concerns relating to women's employment.

Indicators are thus potential instruments of great significance for action. But understanding and elaborating indicators are not enough. They have to be *used* as well, and used *well* by analysts, policy-makers, planners and managers of social action programmes.

In this context it can be seen that while many social concerns, especially fundamental ones, may be considered to be "universal", indicators themselves are most assuredly *not* universal. Nor are they value free, quite the contrary, for policy relevant indicators are goal-oriented, which is why they have to be elaborated and used within their own socio-economic and socio-cultural settings. This is why we at Unesco refrain from proposing normative lists of indicators in favour of promotion and co-operation with planners and policy-makers in Member States in their elaboration and use of indicators.

Erwin S. Solomon,
Director
Division for Socio-Economic Analysis,
Unesco

Discrimination against women in public activities is certainly not limited to any one geographic area or cultural region; it occurs in both highly developed and in underdeveloped countries. Whereas in some places it is the result of long-standing cultural traditions, in others it takes on more subtle psychological forms. Women in German-speaking regions have long borne the brunt of the three "K's" *(Kinder, Kirche, Küche,* children, church, kitchen).

In many developed countries where higher education and jobs have opened up for women in recent decades, it is noteworthy that women tend to concentrate in certain kinds of services which may be seen simply as an extension into the market of their domestic sphere: schoolteaching, nursing, sewing, food services, maintenance, secretarial, entertainment and similar activities of a subordinate nature. Again, when the issue of participation is raised it is useful to analyse the types of jobs to which women have easier access and to study the social significance of these activities in each particular culture.

It is commonly held that equality between the sexes will be achieved when women have equal access to what has been traditionally a "man's world". Much less is said, however, about men's equal responsibility in the domestic sphere, the implication being that women will continue to cover that area as their own special domain, in addition to their new achievements.

Obviously, the issue is more complex than simply exchanging sex-roles, a process which in many societies is staunchly resisted not only by men but by numerous women as well, and which runs counter to many of the basic cultural values that children learn at home and at school. The long term improvement of the status of women in society must needs imply a social redefinition of the domestic support economy and of the functions of the family institution. The fact that this issue is scarcely mentioned when the "integration of women in development" is proclaimed, simply shows that the domestic economy is still very much "hidden" from public perception.

Before the growth of the modern urban industrial society, the large or extended family was the basic social institution, the

"Woman's position in the world can only be properly understood if it is seen in the perspective of her relationship with man and within the context of the social institutions that determine the interactions between the sexes. Improvement in the status of women therefore implies a redefinition of traditional roles both within the family and in working life." Below, the head of one of the world's largest motion picture companies surrounded by her male assistants. Opposite page, the god and goddess of procreation depicted with equal stature by a Totonac Indian sculptor some 1,500 years ago, in what is now Mexico.

Photo S. Schapiro © Sygma, Paris

Educational statistics (such as enrolment, attendance and drop-out figures) are much more than cold figures that reveal the bare facts about the degree of access of women to educational systems. They constitute a highly significant "social indicator" or yardstick of broader aspects of women's position in society which can be used for monitoring change in public attitudes towards the liberation of women and girls from traditional social prejudices, evaluating the opportunities available to them to achieve self-reliance and self-fulfilment, and assessing their potential contribution to national development. Right, off to school in Upper Volta.

Photo © Erling Mandelmann. 4th World Photographic Exhibition, Stern, Hamburg

"In taking care of domestic chores and, particularly, in bearing and raising children, women play a decisive role in one of the key elements of any economy: the reproduction of the labour force." But the fact of motherhood often becomes the pretext for isolating women from the social and economic fabric of which they are part. This reinforces the concept, often ascribed originally to ethnologists, of the dichotomy between man as *Homo faber,* the technician, and woman, closer to nature as wife and mother.

Doll and photo by Christiane de Casteras and Andrée Marquet

Photo Constantin Manos © Magnum, Paris

"A famous economist once remarked that if all gentlemen were to marry their (paid) housekeepers, the indicators would show a decrease in the participation of women in the labour force and a reduction in the national income." As wives they would no longer be listed as wage-earners and would therefore not figure in national statistics. In rural communities wives contribute largely to the economy through the production of food. Right, a Greek woman prepares the family bread.

Photo © New China Pictures Co., Peking

Women constitute 40 per cent of the work force in China today. Since 1957, the number of women workers has increased from three million to thirty million in the fields of trade, industry, communications and finance. Amongst them are numbered many "labour heroines" — oil-drillers, pilots, bridge-builders and high tension power line workers. Many more take part in the management of State affairs and in scientific development. Left, a young botanist carrying out artificial pollination at the Evergreen Commune, near Peking.

Average Female Earnings as a Percent of Average Male Earnings in 19 OECD* Countries, 1968 and 1977

	1968	1977
Australia	70 (1972)	82
Austria	67 (1960)	74
Belgium	67	70
Canada	54 (1961)	50 (1971)
Denmark	74	85
France	86 (1972)	86
Fed. Rep. of Germany	69	73
Greece	68	70
Ireland	55	61 (1973)
Japan	43 (1960)	56 (1975)
Luxembourg	57	65
Netherlands	74	81
New Zealand	70 (1972)	79
Norway	75	80
Portugal	64 (1974)	73
Sweden	78	87
Switzerland	64	68
United Kingdom	60	72
United States	66 (1973)	66

Note: Data for Belgium, Denmark, France, Fed. Rep. of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom are based on average hourly wages in non-agricultural industries from Table 16, 1978 Yearbook of Labour Statistics, ILO; data for Norway and Sweden are based on hourly wages for manufacturing given in Table 17 in the same Yearbook. Data for United States are average full-time hourly estimates; for Canada, full-time earnings; and from National Reports, hourly for New Zealand, weekly for Australia, monthly for Japan and Portugal, and annual for Austria.

*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

fundamental economic unit of production and consumption. It had many social functions: education, security, care for the ill and the aged, solidarity, community integration, among others. Most of the needs of its members could be satisfied within the family structure. In many parts of the world this is still the case, particularly in the rural areas of the Third World countries. Indeed, perhaps a majority of the world's families are of this kind.

However, with the industrial revolution came a basic cleavage between outside economic activities and family life. Other specialized institutions, both public and private, took over many of the functions formerly dealt with by the family. And whereas the menfolk became basically involved in these institutions, the women stayed behind to take care of what remained of home and household.

In the urban-industrial society the old concepts relating to family structure are no longer pertinent, and women are torn between the two roles that a complex society holds up to them as a model: home on the one hand, career on the other. The position of women in society will definitely improve if and when the family is able to redefine its own functions and when the hidden domestic economy is brought out into the open and dealt with on an equal plane with, say, the production of foodstuffs or the energy problem.

Recent years have witnessed the growth of academic interest in the problems of women. In a number of countries "women's studies" have achieved university status as special courses are taught or research centres are organized. To be sure, this is not only the result of scientific concerns. Women's studies are more or less closely related to women's organizations for political and civic action, in other words, to the ever widening movements in favour of women's emancipation. These studies have provided much important new knowledge about the situation of women in different societies, and are creating everywhere a new awareness, mainly among women themselves, about the issues at hand.

Yet it is precisely their very success which should sound a note of caution. As was suggested above, the problems of women cannot be isolated from those of the general evolution of the economy and the society, with which they are deeply enmeshed. By underlining the specificity of women's studies, is there not a danger of isolating them from the general social fabric of which they are a part? To be sure, a middle class urban housewife in an industrialized country may have much in common, as a woman, with a peasant mother in the Third World. But is not the former more closely linked to the problems of her own particular society and the latter to the destiny of peasantries the world over?

The new academic discipline of "women's studies" cannot afford to lead a ghetto existence in isolation from the necessarily interdisciplinary approach which is required to fully comprehend the social and economic problems of women in different cultures. This new and exciting field of research and analysis is an important step in laying bare the multiple and complex problems of the "invisible" woman in the contemporary world.

■ **Rodolfo Stavenhagen**

The plight of the

Drawing © Norm Walker, Connecticut, USA

woman-breadwinner

by Mayra Buvinic, Nadia H. Youssef and Ilsa Schumacher

ONE of the reasons why women are consistently losing out in development programmes designed to improve the conditions of the world's needy is that women's economic activities are misreported by censuses and other data.

Work that is not performed for wages in the formal sector of the economy is not counted as work. Women in developing countries who work for wages in addition to performing household duties are often categorized as "housewives" rather than as members of the labour force. Thus in performing a double duty of work at home and work for wages, women are not counted as working persons.

This inadequate data base for women is probably due to a deeply ingrained Western vision that places women inside the home and restricts their functions to those of homemakers and childbearers. The data base for women as reproducers (childbearers and child-rearers) is infinitely more satisfactory than the data base for women as economic producers.

Development policies have reflected these data inadequacies and imbalances as well as harbouring the belief that women's place is in the home; women have been "targeted" as concerns to development planners because of their reproduction and child-rearing, not because of their productive functions.

Since the productive economic activities of women have not been reflected in censuses and world tables, development policies whose goal is to raise the standard of living of the poor have not utilized women's economic resources. Policy makers have not realized that women's inefficient and under-remunerated economic activities add to the grim overall economic picture of underdevelopment. Nor have they become aware that increasing women's productivity is crucial to improving this economic picture.

Directed primarily to women of childbearing age, development projects in the past have been basically designed to provide family planning and nutrition information. When they have explored income raising opportunities for women, they have done so with the goal of reducing fertility rather than raising income *per se*. The reasoning was that when women were provided with viable options to early marriage and ensuing motherhood, fertility rates would consequently decline.

A corollary to the Western vision of women as homemakers and childbearers places women in a nuclear family structure where the man is the sole economic provider *and* the head of the household or in a non-Western family organization characterized by strong familism and male supremacy. The traditional family in the non-West (such as joint and extended families) is seen as a welfare system that provides psychological, legal and economic protection toward its kinsmen and kinswomen. It is assumed that women's rights are protected, and that women are extended economic support regardless of whether they are single, married, divorced, widowed or abandoned.

Relying on assumptions and protected by the lack of almost any data, development practitioners have not considered the possibility of targeting some of their aid to women-headed households in the developing countries. But why should they? While arousing doubts, the assumption that men provide for and protect nuclear households in non-Western countries continues to prevail in the minds of the development planners.

In the United States this myth of the ideal nuclear family structure was debunked when it became apparent that women were the sole heads of 34 per cent of all minority households and 11 per cent of all white families. In 1972, 52 per cent of the former and 25 per cent of the latter families were below the poverty level as compared to only 5 per cent of families with an adult male head who were below this level.

Additional data have revealed that this is by no means a phenomenon restricted to the United States. Women-headed households account for 35 per cent of all households in many parts of the Caribbean. Between 1960 and 1970, the proportion of such households doubled in Brazil and increased by 33 per cent in Morocco. Using census data for 74 developing countries we calculated the total range of adult women who because of their current marital/family status carry the "potential" of being or eventually becoming family heads.(1)

The percentage of potential household heads who are women among total potential household heads (2) varies from 10 per cent to 48 per cent; the average for 74 countries is 18 per cent. Their proportion could be 18 per cent in India, 23 per cent in Indonesia, and about 46 per cent of the household heads in Botswana, 18 per cent in Kenya and 15 per cent in Iran.

As heads of families these women are often solely responsible for providing for and protecting the social and economic well-being of their family members. Yet it appears that these women have the least resources to fall back upon and often receive the lowest wages. Recent international data lead us to believe that these women's families constitute a major section of the poor in all countries (be it in Central and South America, in sub-Saharan and North Africa or Asia) and that they might be "the poorest of them all."

In Santiago, Chile, a 1973 field inquiry in marginal slums showed that 29 per cent of the women who headed families as compared to only 10 per cent of the men fell into the lowest income bracket. In Guayaquil, Ecuador, a similar survey indicated that 37.5 per cent of the women and 17 per cent of the male family heads fell into the lowest income brackets. A representative sample survey of metropolitan Belo Horizonte, Brazil, revealed that 41 per cent of the female-headed households as compared to 26 per cent of the male-headed households were at poverty levels.

Moreover, when households headed by prime age, divorced and separated women were singled out, the proportion at poverty levels reached 60 per cent. Reports from a rural income distribution survey in Botswana showed women-headed households to be significantly poorer than men's.

For 15 Commonwealth Caribbean countries, 59 per cent of female-headed households and only 21 per cent of male-headed households reported "no income" or "not stated" income; on the other side of the spectrum, 54 per cent of the male-headed households earned a thousand dollars or more per month while only 13 per cent of the female-headed households earned these amounts. This rise in households headed by women in developing countries and their poverty status portray, in extreme form, the need to correct the biases in official statistics used for development planning.

In the industrialized West divorce is a major cause for the rise in women-headed households; in Turkey, Algeria, Morocco and Italy it is the emigration of male and female labour to industrial centres of Europe. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is male emigration to towns and cities; in South Africa and Zambia, men migrate to work in the mines, leaving their families behind. In Central and South America, female headship is created by women migrating to the cities and by unstable serial unions in which reproduction takes place, leaving mother and children often abandoned in poverty.

In parts of the Middle East, real conflicts are surfacing between increasing economic pressures and the continued existence of traditional obligations that inhibit kinship units from providing economic support to female members as it is "ideally" and even

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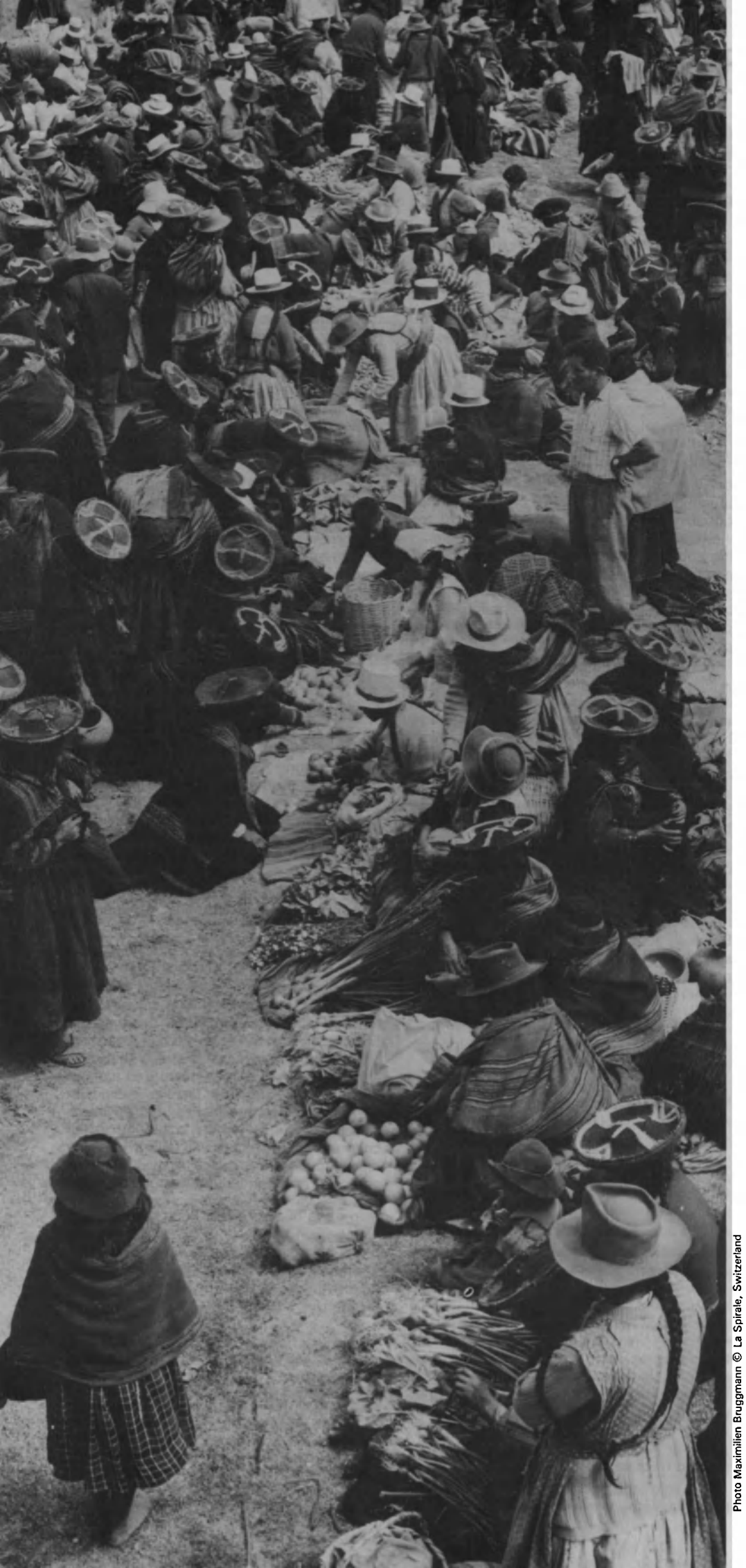

Photo Maximilien Brugmann © La Spirale, Switzerland

Left, Peruvian women sell their produce at the market at Chincheros, near Cuzco. In addition to running their households, women in the developing countries are active in important sectors of the economy, particularly in the growing and marketing of agricultural produce. But since these activities are difficult to value and measure and are outside the formal sector of the economy, they do not appear in any account as a contribution to the national economy. Development planners, therefore, tend to see women's contribution as merely supplementary or optional and to direct their efforts towards providing more remunerative and productive employment opportunities for men, arguing that men's employment benefits the whole family. As a result, no help at all is directed to those who need it most—those households that are headed by women and which constitute the major section of the poor in all countries.

legally prescribed. In many countries, male unemployment and male marginality have prevented men from keeping their economic obligations towards their kinswomen. This has contributed to the breakdown of the extended family.

The fact that an increasing number of women among the poor are becoming the sole or main economic providers for their families, coupled with the fact that their productive activities, ignored by censuses and planners alike, are mostly marginal, inefficient and under-remunerated should make women-headed households one of the main targets of the new development directions.

Concern has already been expressed that in implementing the "basic needs strategy" planners will fall into the trap of providing adequate—i.e., more remunerative and productive—employment to unemployed and underemployed men, leaving the presently overworked and undercounted women with inadequate employment. This concern becomes overriding when the classic argument that men's employment will benefit the family is no longer applicable. It clearly does so in the case of households that are headed by women.

Efforts invested in assisting women heading poor households with dependents in developing countries, by providing these women, above all, with adequate training opportunities and employment, should have a positive effect on the economic development of these countries. Increasing the productive capacity of this group of women workers will help the country's economy in the short run. Expanding the income potential of these women will have a marked impact upon the economy in the long run by paving the way for the emergence of a capable future work force represented by the children of women who head households.

■ **Mayra Buvinic, Nadia H. Youssef and Ilsa Schumacher**

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(1) "Potential women heads of household" includes all women who are widowed, divorced, separated or single mothers.

(2) "Total potential household heads" includes potential women heads of household plus men over the age of twenty who are not single.

Women and apartheid

'Black South African women stand on the lowest rung of the ladder of oppression'

by Frene Ginwala and Shirley Mashiane

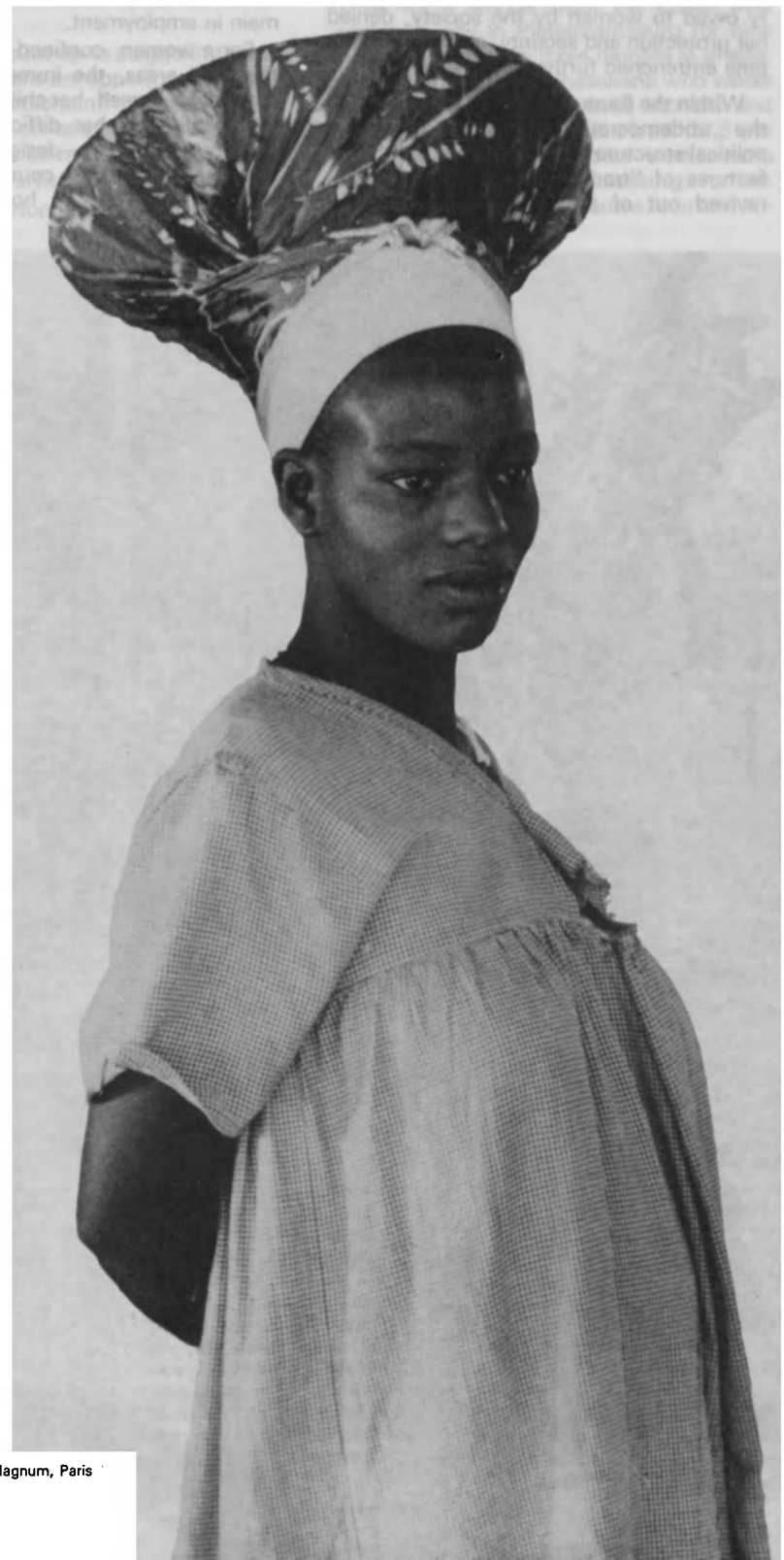

Photo Eve Arnold © Magnum, Paris

WHILE apartheid affects the lives of all black South Africans with horrifying brutality, it is harshest in its effect upon African women. As an African in a racially differentiated society, as a worker in a system dependent upon, and therefore structured to provide, cheap labour, and as a woman in a society controlled and dominated by men, the African woman stands on the lowest rung of the ladder of oppression.

The experience of apartheid, its direct impact upon African women, the manner in which it circumscribes their lives and impinges upon every aspect of their existence, the denial of a family life, the control of their labour, the limits on movement, the subordinate status, the poverty, the struggle for survival through the myriad laws, regulations, restrictions, permits and denials, all have served to raise the political consciousness of African women in South Africa.

In the South African legal system, African women are considered as dependent upon men, who themselves have no rights. Under the Natal code, women have a status of perpetual minority. Regardless of age, education or economic status, a woman may not inherit or own property in her own right, enter into contracts or obtain credit. She is always under the guardianship of her father, her husband or other male relative. Under customary law, the father's estate generally passes to the male heirs only. Laws incorporating similar provisions apply in other parts of South Africa. In areas reserved for Africans, land is not allocated to women.

In rural areas, where the migrant labour system has made women the effective heads of households, they can only administer or manage what land or income there is on a day-to-day basis, for they re-

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main dependent upon their husbands for decision-making.

In urban areas, women are dependent on men for a roof over their heads. African women are not allocated housing and cannot be registered tenants of rented houses. Widows, divorcees and deserted wives cannot automatically remain in their homes. For them and for single women the choice, if choice it be, is either to become a lodger or live in a single hostel.

In the areas where an African woman is considered separately from father/husband/son/male relative, the apartheid system again works to her detriment. Apartheid does not consider the African family as a unit. Africans do not qualify for married and family allowances in taxation. For purposes of residence or movement in South Africa, Africans, regardless of sex, are considered as single individuals. Throughout what is designated as white South Africa (87 per cent of the land area), each member of an African family—mother, father and children over sixteen—has to qualify separately as a single unit of labour for the right to reside in the area. Even when such a "right" is acquired by more than one family member, it does not follow that they may live together as a family unit.

In the 13 per cent of South Africa where the white-made law does not make it illegal for an African family to live together, there is little land and what may be available is eroded and employment opportunities are minuscule. The system created to provide cheap labour forces the family apart, with the job-seekers vying with each other and the labour bureau bureaucracy for the "right" to labour alone in "white" South Africa. Upon the woman falls the burden not just of reproducing labour but also of ensuring her own survival and that of her children, and the old, the sick and the handicapped.

In pre-colonial societies, women were usually subject to the control of chiefs, headmen and heads of families. The division of labour, though sexually differentiated, was not simply biologically based, nor was it egalitarian. However, traditional societies did afford women respect, protection and security. Colonial laws and later the apartheid system have removed the responsibility owed to woman by the society, denied her protection and security, and at the same time entrenched further her disabilities.

Within the Bantustans, one finds mirrored the undemocratic and male-dominated political structures of the white rulers. Some features of "traditional" society are being revived out of their historical and social context. The first act of the Gazankulu Bantustan was the legalization of polygamy. The Transkei has introduced polygamy and corporal punishment for girls. The position of women was strikingly illustrated by the arbitrary dismissal of a woman minister, Stella Sigcau, on the grounds that she had become pregnant though unmarried.

The Bantustan leadership collaborates in the relocation of labour-intensive industries to designated border areas where female labour in particular is easily exploited. The Bantu Development Corporations and individual officials are frequently involved in such enterprises, paying wages that are appallingly low even by apartheid standards.

The Bantu education system entrenches a conception of women's "traditional" role. While limiting the scope of training offered to all Africans, technical training for girls is limited to domestic science curricula. Neither the public service nor the tribal universities will allow married women to remain in employment.

For a woman, confined by the system to the rural areas, the immediate concern is survival for herself, her children and parents. In recent years her difficulties have been compounded. The designation of Bantustans as "foreign" countries has shifted the costs of feeding, housing, education

and providing for families on to economies that are not viable and unable to sustain the population. In white South Africa, units of labour may enter and remain only so long as they are needed. What have been callously termed the "superfluous appendages", the women, the children, the old, the sick and the handicapped, must go back and remain in the Bantustans.

The relentless drive to remove Africans from the urban areas and to move communities around arbitrarily has resulted in the uprooting of over three million people. To this must be added the eviction of African labour tenants following the increased mechanization of white farms. More and more people are pushed into areas where the land cannot support the existing population and the employment opportunities are few. In KwaZulu, sites for the resettlement of 300,000 people are being sought. Within the last decade the resident population of QuaQua has increased from 24,000 to over 200,000.

The figures mount up to staggering totals and the implications are appalling when one realizes that "resettlement" is a synonym for dumping people on empty wasteland. The population on the barren land thus increases and with it the burdens on the women.

Women are no longer able to go legally to the urban areas to take up employment. The only opportunities available to them are the two sectors with the lowest pay and the greatest exploitation: agriculture and industries set up in the border areas where industry is exempted from even those few safeguards provided for black workers under the apartheid system.

Rather than accept such employment, many defy the law and go to the urban areas illegally. Some join their husbands and try to establish some kind of family life in "squatter" camps. Others go to find employment. For all of them, pass raids, detention, prison and fines are considered as the price to be paid for survival in apartheid South Africa.

For, despite having to spend months of each year in prison, they are better off than if they had remained in the rural areas. The *Financial Mail* last year published the results of a survey that revealed that there was a 702.7 per cent improvement in living standards for a worker from the Ciskei who works illegally in Pietermaritzburg for nine months and spends three months in prison. A worker from Bophuthatswana who works illegally in Pretoria for three months and spends nine months in prison is still 28.5 per cent better off. A Lebowa worker who works illegally in Johannesburg for six months and spends six months in prison improves his living standards by 170 per cent *(Financial Mail,* 12 October 1979).

For women, who earn less than men, the improvement would be correspondingly lower. The real economic conditions in the Bantustans can be gauged when one recalls that, even after a 700 per cent improvement, the majority of male workers in urban areas earn wages below the poverty datum line—and women's wages are lower still.

There are women literally scratching for food in the parched soil of the Bantustans. There are women slaving for meagre wages in the fields and in the border industries. There are also women in tens of thousands who live with their families and obtain employment in defiance of apartheid laws.

Last year 20,290 women were arrested for contravening pass and influx control laws. *(Rand Daily Mail,* 4 March 1980). Husbands and children are kept illegally in "single" domestic quarters. Men and women who qualify by apartheid regulations to live only as "singles", live together in squatter camps. Long established communities, arbitrarily removed elsewhere, return and live illegally.

A small number of women are permitted to live legally in the urban areas, for they qualified before the total proscription was

"For a woman confined by the system to the rural areas, the immediate concern is survival for herself, her children and parents. The designation of Bantustans as 'foreign' countries has shifted the costs of feeding, housing, education and providing for families on to economies that are not viable and are unable to sustain the population."

Photo John Seymour © Parimage, Paris.

"The majority of women employed in the urban areas are domestic workers. Though many employers require them to reside in quarters provided in their backyards, they are not permitted to have husbands or children to stay with them overnight... Domestic workers are not covered by protective legislation and their wages are notoriously low."

Photo Abbar ⅋ Gamma, Paris

introduced. The majority of women employed in the urban areas are domestic workers. Though many employers require them to reside in quarters provided in their backyards, they are not permitted to have husbands or children to stay with them overnight. Contract domestic workers are required to sign a statement acknowledging that violation of these regulations would lead to a cancellation of the contract.

Domestic workers are not covered by any protective legislation and their wages are notoriously low. Over 60 per cent of economically active African women are employed as domestic or agricultural workers in sectors where no minimum wages are laid down and no unemployment insurance is available.

Throughout the economy, African women on average earn less than half the amount African men are paid, and only eight per cent of white men's average earnings. The Industrial Conciliation and Wage Acts permit differentiation on the grounds of sex and, in more than 240 job categories, minimum wages for men are fixed at a higher figure than minimum wages for women *(Financial Mail,* 18 May 1979).

Because of their lower pay scales, African women are often preferred in labour-intensive industry, and the number employed in manufacturing has increased steadily. Occasionally employers replace male workers with women. An example that illustrates the changing pattern of using ever cheaper labour is provided by the Natal textile industry. At an early stage the workers were mostly Coloured and Indian men. In the 1930s, white women became significant but their numbers fell rapidly in the 1940s, with African men and Coloured and Indian women being employed in greater numbers. In the 1950s, African men were in the majority but a decade later African women were being employed. Today women, mostly African, form about 70 per cent of the work force.

Apartheid regulations have a logic and purpose, and the system is designed to ensure the availability of cheap exploited labour. The legal dependence of women, the migrant labour system and impoverishment of the rural areas, the precarious nature of any status a woman may acquire and the refusal to recognize African family units have combined to create a state of impermanence and insecurity and have served their purpose in making African women the cheapest form of labour within the apartheid system.

Yet the struggle to live together where they choose, to take what work is available in defiance of the machinery of the State, continues. Women of the Barolong people continued to return to the village of Majeng from which they had been removed. The first group that returned was arrested and found guilty of trespass; the second was returned to the new area of Vaalboschhoek. The return and arrest of a third group brought recognition of their grievances from the magistrate and a decision from the authorities to find them a more suitable area for resettlement.

At Crossroads the resistance to removal has been on a larger scale. Crossroads is called a "squatter camp", but it has shown itself to be a viable community in which the bonds have grown stronger due to the people's struggle to remain where they are.

Faced with the prospect of being moved, the Crossroads Women's Committee has succeeded in organizing the residents and in mobilizing national and international support. They have staked their claim to permanence by establishing a school. The women have kept watch to deter surreptitious demolition of houses; they have gathered in groups the better to confront the police and demolition squads. They sat down in the fields and demanded to be arrested as a group. They sat down before the bulldozers and refused to move. They dramatized their struggle in theatre and have taken it across South Africa and projected it upon the television screens of Europe and the United States.

They have not yet won the right to remain permanently, but four years after an application was first made to the courts to remove more than 10,000 people, Crossroads is still there and the people have not moved.

It should not be forgotten that the white South African society is also a society dominated by males. Even among the privileged white group, women are noticeable by their absence in organs of decision-making. Though enfranchised since 1930, there are today only two women among the members of the all-white Parliament and none in the Cabinet. The Broederbond, which controls all the instruments of power in the country, does not allow women as members and no women are to be seen at the senior levels of the National Party.

There are no women among the directors

Above, members of the African National Congress Women's League outside a pass control office. Women have played a major role in the liberation struggle. One leading figure, Lilian Ngoyi, who was president of the Women's League in the 1950s, died in March this year after 16 consecutive years under a banning order which meant that she was forbidden to write or speak in public or to meet with more than one person at a time. The African National Congress (ANC) is the oldest liberation movement in South Africa. Since it was founded in 1912 the ANC has advocated equality between blacks and whites and a non-racial, democratic South Africa. It tried for fifty years to bring change through peaceful means. The President of ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961, the first African to be so honoured. The ANC was banned in 1960 following the Sharpeville massacre when police fired on a peaceful demonstration killing 69 people. The Government declared a state of emergency and thousands were arrested. In response to continued state violence and concluding that peaceful resistance was impossible, the ANC went underground and formed a military section, *Umkhonto We Sizewe,* which means "Spear of the Nation". Many ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela, are serving sentences of imprisonment. The programme of the ANC is enshrined in the Freedom Charter adopted 25 years ago. It declared that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and calls for no discrimination on the grounds of race or sex and a redistribution of the land and wealth of the country. Right, view of the Crossroads "squatter camp", near Cape Town. For four years the women of Crossroads have resisted attempts by the South African Government to remove the settlement's 10,000 inhabitants.

Photo Govender © A.N.C., London

of the Anglo-American Corporation. No woman is at the head of any major South African industry, mining house, finance or banking institution. White women also suffer from discrimination in wages. On average they earn only 44 per cent of the earnings of their male counterparts and the sectors of white employment in which white women are found are also those with the lowest white wage scales.

Yet, when compared with black women, white women are privileged indeed. To a degree unknown in the rest of the world, they are free from domestic labour and responsibility. Most importantly, they have the franchise and legal opportunities which would allow them to shape a more egalitarian society. This they have not done. Cushioned by their comfort and privilege, they have in general even refused to acknowledge the oppression of black women and failed to recognize their own.

Some white women have understood and concerned themselves with the causes of oppression in South Africa. A few Afrikaner women from the most exploited of the white working class helped to build trade unions across racial lines. A small number of white women have perceived the nature of apartheid and have worked with the liberation movement.

But the majority are cocooned by their privilege. Most of those who see beyond it concentrate on the symptoms rather than the causes. They have formed organizations and groups that reject politics but fail to recognize that political power is at the root of the problem. They call for peace but ignore the need for justice and a people's right to fight for it. They call for contact across racial barriers, extending one hand while propping up separate development with the other.

Their efforts are directed towards charity and humanitarian assistance for the suffering. They busy themselves making the "slave quarters" in their immediate environment more comfortable rather than tackling the root cause of the suffering of the black people—apartheid. This is not to deny their contribution in alleviating suffering but it is necessary to differentiate such organizations from the emancipatory organizations of the oppressed, and such efforts from the liberation struggle.

South African women recognize that it is not men who oppress them but the apartheid system. They do not seek or want a liberation that will give them equality to share the oppression of African men. For them, the liberation struggle is the battle for the liberation of all the South African people, men and women, black and white, from the apartheid system.

That is not to say that victory over apartheid is seen as automatically removing the oppression of women, nor that after national liberation women will begin a new struggle for their liberation. Rather they see the two as intertwined. For, in the course of the liberation struggle, the question is asked and must be answered—freedom from apartheid, but after that what kind of society ?

The Freedom Charter embodies the aspirations of the oppressed people of South Africa and is the programme of the national liberation movement. In its clauses there is a commitment to equality of status, franchise and economic rights for men with women.

The goals of the liberation struggle are refined as the struggle progresses. But it is in the process, too, that attitudes are fashioned and the foundations laid for the realization of such goals.

To the extent therefore that women participate in the liberation struggle they will be able to influence and determine their status and role in the new society and help to create the egalitarian structures and conditions of a free South Africa.

The liberation struggle of the South African people has received a wide measure of international support. In their areas of competence, non-governmental organizations have sought to isolate apartheid South Africa. They have recognized that the imposition of mandatory economic sanctions against the Pretoria regime under Chapter VII of the UN Charter is the single most effective action the international community can take in support of the liberation struggle and have campaigned within their countries and internationally for such action.

International agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations have also taken steps to provide direct assistance to the liberation movement. There is a need for assistance to be given, focused specifically on the requirements of women, to help them overcome the particular impact of apartheid on women and to promote their fullest participation in the liberation struggle and in the development of a free and democratic South Africa.

■ **Frene Ginwala and Shirley Mashiane**

Photo Eckhard Supp © Rapho, Paris

WOMEN ARE *HUMAN BEINGS*

"The emancipation of women is only part and parcel of the emancipation of society as a whole. I don't find the emancipation of women (if it is possible) sufficient in itself. I would remove all kinds of oppression, whether of men or women or social classes. But women must learn theory if they are to advance. Do you know what women lack most? The knowledge, the deep-rooted knowledge and conviction, that they are human beings."

44-year-old Egyptian writer and playwright

WOMEN PREPARE THE FUTURE

"I would educate women *more* than men. Women bear and raise the children—so women prepare the future. How can the future be good if women are ignorant?"

Semiliterate Zapotec Indian woman

TO BE BORN A WOMAN IS A SIN

"I would rather have been a man; to be born a woman is a sin. To be born a man is a privilege. Those who have done good things—or have not done bad things—will have an opportunity to be born men. If men's and women's education is equal, there are no differences, really—I know that whatever a man can do, a woman can do also—but it is still a privilege to be born a man."

45-year-old Sri Lankan woman

A NATIONAL HERO

"Do you know what I would choose for a statue of a national hero in this country? The working woman. The working woman is the national hero because she goes to school and then goes to a university and graduates. She works too—takes a job. She works exactly like a man. Even in the fields, the peasant woman works beside the husband, seven hours a day at hard work. Then she goes home and is required to play the role of housewife 100 per cent—cooking, cleaning, washing, caring for the children. A woman does two major jobs, which no man would ever be able to do."

Woman director of an Egyptian publishing house

A BIT OF AN EXCEPTION

"In Tunisia, I think I am considered a bit of an exception. My parents and my children feel this when they compare me to other mothers. My husband is very active; so am I. My children objected when I accepted the position of president of the Women's Union. They had had enough. They thought we were both too politically minded, too active. My children would like to keep me as a mother. When I read the newspaper at the table they say, 'That's the end. We've had it. You have become just like our father'.

President of the National Union of Tunisian Women

SO MANY THINGS TO DO

"Women, you know, have more talents for doing things than men. It's only that men's talents are better recognized because they only concentrate on a few things. Women have got so many things to do that nobody ever looks at how many things they do. If I had a chance to learn something, I would like to learn how to help people. I would like to be a nurse".

17-year-old Kenyan villager

Photo George Rodger © Magnum, Paris

Women speak

A CERTAIN NUMBER OF EGGS TO LAY

"My husband used to say that it isn't normal to avoid a life that you are destined to have. He said that if I had been given a potential to bear a certain number of children, it was necessary to bring them into the world. He said I didn't have the right to prevent it—that I was like a chicken with a certain number of eggs to lay, and that I had to lay them. He said it would be a sin not to. My husband at first didn't know that I had a contraceptive device. I didn't want any more children. My health wouldn't stand it. Now he agrees because they talk about it on the radio."

Tunisian nomad woman with ten children

WHAT A PITY YOU DID NOT HAVE A SON

"I was an only child, and a girl. In a Sri Lankan family, that is a sad thing for a father. Right in front of me people would say to my father, 'What a pity you did not have a son'. I don't know for what reason, but I think my father always believed that women should be emancipated. For example, he was against the dowry. He even brought a motion against the dowry system in parliament in 1936. But the motion was defeated. He had modern ideas, and he always pushed me on. He treated me as if I were a boy. He pushed me on from one class to another, and I would say, 'Oh, that's enough. I'm a mere girl. How can I pass that examination?' But he would say, 'Go on, go on'. He'd take me somewhere and say 'This is my daughter. She's in school and she's done this and that', and I would feel embarrassed and ashamed. My father influenced me very much."

Famous Sri Lankan political scientist

WOMEN ARE VERY COURAGEOUS

"You know, women are very courageous—just like men. We have women leaders who step right up, give speeches or lead demonstrations. If our women see this, it will encourage them. It will make them feel that, after all, we are not still in the past."

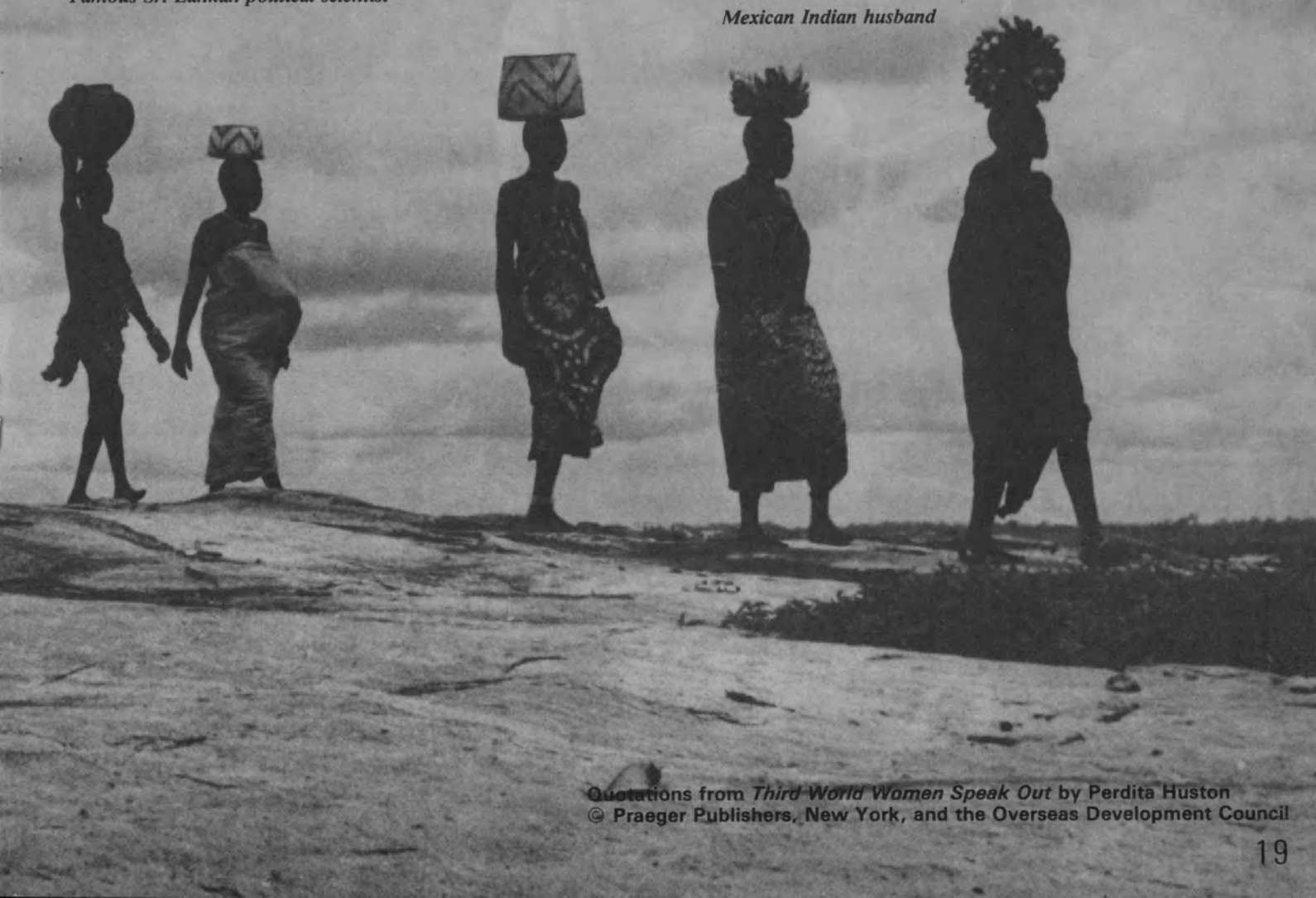
Sudanese social welfare worker

THE LAST WORD...

...FROM A MAN

"The reason men don't want to have women in authority is because they don't want women giving them orders. They are accustomed to giving orders themselves, and they don't want women doing it. That's very clear. But I wish a woman would get elected mayor of this town. The men haven't done any good. All they do is get drunk. We should give women a chance to see if they can do better".

Mexican Indian husband



Quotations from *Third World Women Speak Out* by Perdita Huston
© Praeger Publishers, New York, and the Overseas Development Council

Male chauvinism in the mass media

Photo Marc Riboud © Magnum, Paris

"A further indication of the media's emphasis on male authority is the reliance on male voices in advertizing to 'sell' products."

Photo © I.P.S., Paris

by Margaret Gallagher

IN many ways, mass media systems are a reflection, in microcosm, of distributions of power and control. In a world where women's access to political and economic power is in most cases severely limited, their status and roles are defined within political, economic and cultural systems which tend to exclude them from active participation. So, in the sense that cultural agents or institutions contribute to the socialization process within systems which are directed by political and economic imperatives, the mass media's role is primarily to reinforce definitions and identities set in a framework constructed for and by men.

A number of factors particular to the structure and internal demands of media organizations have suggested to some theorists of sexual inequality that the mass media may play a particularly conservative role in socialization, reinforcing traditional values and beliefs.

These factors include the sexual composition of the media work-force which in almost every country is predominantly male, overwhelmingly so in the influential areas of management and production. Then there is the reliance of many mass media organizations on commercial backing and a consequent pressure to deal in known and accepted images and contents. Thirdly, mass media products, whether television or radio programmes, magazines, newspapers or films, are, in general, required to make an immediate and vivid impact and to be quickly and easily absorbed by their audience. Considerable reliance is therefore placed on the use of simplified, recognizable and standardized characterizations in media output.

For these reasons, the concern of researchers has been to identify the extent to which the media present a social reality which, if not demonstrably false, feeds on the most conservative forces in society, ignoring new trends until they have become relatively established and accepted, thus fulfilling a primarily reinforcing role rather than a transforming one in the culture.

A problem arises, however, from the geographical bias of the available data, much of which originates in North America and Western Europe, although there is a growing body of research and documentation from Australia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and from Asia.

Information from Africa and the Pacific remains scant, while data from Eastern European countries are difficult to locate. In the case of Africa and the Pacific, the lack of documentation primarily reflects a preoccupation with developing what are relatively young media systems. Experiences tend to be documented at later stages in the process.

The difficulty in obtaining data from Eastern European socialist countries arises largely from the fact that a specific set of problems concerning the relationships of women and the mass media do not seem to be formulated in a distinct way in these societies.

Overall, media treatment of women can

CONTINUED PAGE 24

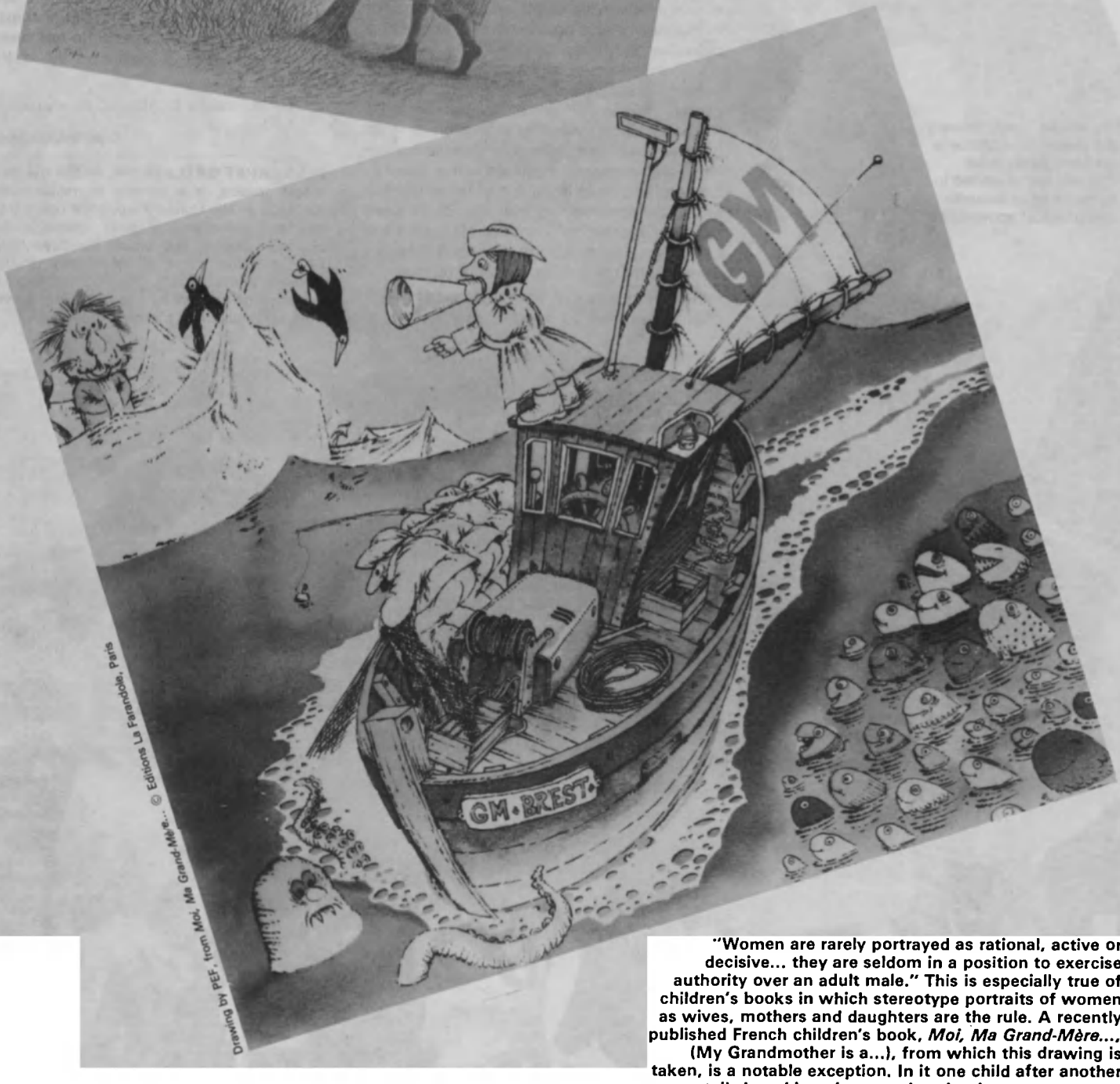
MARGARET GALLAGHER, *British specialist in media studies, is a lecturer in media research methods at the United Kingdom's Open University and a consultant with Unesco's Social Sciences Sector. This article has been adapted from a report on a global Unesco study on research and action programmes relating to the portrayal of women by the mass media and to their participation in the media industries.*

"In almost every country the media work force is predominantly male... Women are exploited in terms of their sexuality and physical appearance."

"On film, in the press and the broadcast media, women's activities and interests typically go no further than the confines of home and family."

"Overall, the proportion of women employed in film, broadcasting or in the national press rarely exceeds 30 per cent in any country." Nevertheless, a number of outstanding women have stamped their mark upon the media, including the famous US photographer Margaret Bourke-White, seen here, in 1934, perched on a gargoyle outside her 61st-floor studio in the Chrysler building shooting the New York skyline.

Drawing by Topor from *Roland Topor, Rêves de Jour* © 1975 Diogenes Verlag, Zurich



Drawing by PEF, from *Moi, Ma Grand-Mère...* © Editions La Farandole, Paris

"Women are rarely portrayed as rational, active or decisive... they are seldom in a position to exercise authority over an adult male." This is especially true of children's books in which stereotype portraits of women as wives, mothers and daughters are the rule. A recently published French children's book, *Moi, Ma Grand-Mère...*, (My Grandmother is a...), from which this drawing is taken, is a notable exception. In it one child after another tells how his or her grandmother is a cosmonaut, a soldier, an animal-trainer, a racing-driver or, as here, the captain of a fishing boat.

Photo Life Magazine © 1934 Time Inc. Courtesy of estate of Margaret Bourke-White

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

best be described as narrow. On film, in the press and the broadcast media, women's activities and interests typically go no further than the confines of home and family. Characterized as essentially dependent and romantic, women are rarely portrayed as rational, active or decisive.

Both as characters in fictional media material and as newsmakers in the press and broadcasting, women are numerically under-represented, an absence which underlines their marginal and inferior status in many spheres of social, economic and cultural life.

Prevalent news values define most women, and most women's problems, as unnewsworthy, admitting women to coverage primarily as the wives, mothers or daughters of men in the news. In their own right, they make the headlines usually only as fashionable or entertainment figures. Much media advertizing directed at women as consumers is condescending in tone and manipulative in intention; as the "bait" through which products are advertized, women are exploited in terms of their sexuality and physical appearance.

An overwhelming body of North American and European research indicates that, in relation to women's actual participation in the work force, all media under-represent women workers.

This is significant because the question of power and status of men vis-à-vis women in media portrayals relates in part to the kinds of occupational role to which each sex is predominantly assigned. Since women are rarely seen in authoritative positions such as lawyers, doctors, judges, scientists they are seldom in a position to exercise direct authority over an adult male.

A study of the pattern of advising and ordering in male-female interactions found that dramatic characters on television were selected, occupations were assigned and plots developed in such a way as to minimize the chances for women to display superiority, except in traditionally accepted female areas of knowledge. A further indication of the media's emphasis on male authority is the reliance on male voices in advertizing to "sell" products.

In one of the very few cross-cultural studies of media imagery—in Latin American and U.S. working-class and middle-class magazines—it was found that although there were some class and cultural differences, women were overwhelmingly *idealized* in terms of dependence, humility, lack of initiative, lack of career, lack of self-control, intense emotionality, and so on, in *both* cultures. According to the fictional reality of the media, then, women are actually rewarded for ineffectuality, rather than for actively controlling their own lives.

Although information is fragmentary and the evidence is perilously thin, there is some indication that images of women in certain African countries may reflect and benefit from a relatively self-conscious use of the media in the general process of development. Reports suggest a growth in stories about women, as well as a stress on their potential contribution to development at national and international levels.

Relatively little is known about the extent and nature of women's participation in the media industries. Incomplete and often unreliable data paint a patchy picture. Overall, the proportion of women employed in film, broadcasting or in the national press rarely exceeds 30 % in any country: often the percentage is very much lower.

To give some examples from broadcasting: in the United States, 30 % of the work force at television network headquarters and also at network-owned stations in 1977 was female; in Italy, women accounted for 20 % of the jobs in the national television network (RAI),1975. It has been estimated that in India women constituted about 25% of the work force in broadcasting in the same year.

Women do slightly better in some Scandinavian countries: in Sweden women comprise 33 % and in Norway 38 % of all employees in the national broadcasting corporations (1976 figures). At the other end of the scale, only 6 % of those employed in NHK, the Japanese broadcasting system, are women.

In the print media, the picture is really no better. As far as can be established, women rarely account for more than a quarter of the jobs in journalism overall: Hungary, Poland, Canada all have about that proportion and Britain and the Lebanon have slightly fewer (around 20 %). Several European countries report about 15 % of women in press jobs —for example, Norway, Denmark and Germany had this proportion in 1977. Elsewhere, the proportions can be even lower. Estimates put the percentage of women in the Pakistan press at not higher than 10 %, and in the Kenyan press at about 5 %. In Korea, only 2 % of jobs in the press are held by women, while Japanese women

"To date, evidence of the impact of women working within the media, in terms of producing an output which is qualitatively different, is slight... Until women constitute a 'critical mass' within the media, their ability to work against accepted cultural and professional values will be negligible." Valentina Leontieva (in profile at right of photo below), of Central Television, Moscow, is one of the rare women television personalities whose influence is felt throughout the Soviet Union. She is seen here during one of her widely popular discussion programmes at which the principal guest was world-famed geneticist Nikolai Dubinin.

Photo V. Sozinov © Tass, Moscow

occupy no more than 1 % of positions in the press medium.

In some countries, certainly, women now occupy more than 30 % of media jobs in a few, they approach 40 % of media workers. The Swedes have settled on a 60:40 ratio in most occupational sectors as representing national equality. Is it not arguable that in some countries, at least, equality at that level has almost been achieved?

However, scrutiny of the data to see just where in the media women are employed shows that the global figures mask even greater disparities between men and women. For instance, although 38 % of broadcasting jobs in Norway are held by women, 63 % of jobs at the lowest wage level are also filled by women.

Women are generally concentrated at the lower levels of particular job categories, or else hived off into areas which are overwhelmingly "female". For that reason, the Equality Project in Sveriges Radio (the Swedish national broadcasting organization) aims for a minimal 60:40 ratio within any *particular* occupational category.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found that in 1975, although 16 % of jobs in top management or as departmental heads were filled by women, most of these women were not in key policy-making positions. In the same year, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation found that 93 % of management-level jobs were held by men. In the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1977, no management positions were occupied by women. The Italian RAI had 4 % of women in a category spanning administrative and managerial jobs in 1975. In Finland in 1978, all fourteen members of the Board of Directors were male, while at middle-management level 6 % of posts were held by women. The Norwegian broadcasting corporation (NRK) has 50 different departments: only two are headed by women. Of the 71 women in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in 1975, two were heads of section: these were the Head of Audience Research and the Assistant Controller of External Broadcasting.

The same pattern is repeated at the creative/professional level, where access to top posts is very limited for women, unless the area of activity is "feminized". Thus, though there are a fair number of women heading programme departments in children's, women's or even religious and educational programming, and a large number of women editing similar features pages in the press, current affairs, news, drama, science and sport remain almost completely barred.

In Britain in 1975, for example, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACCT) found that only 8 % of its members employed by the independent television companies (ITV) as directors or producer-directors were women. In fact, it established that in all job categories, a much higher proportion of men reached the top grade than women.

Only 2 % of television producers in the ABC (Australia) were women in 1977. These are particularly depressing figures, considering that the bulk of programme support staff, production assistants and production secretaries are women. Two broadcasting organizations with untypically high proportions of women producers are the Swedish and the Singaporean services, where women account for 30 % and 38 % of all producers, respectively.

In journalism too, women predominate at the lower echelons, although the overall picture seems somewhat better than in broadcasting. Thus, about a quarter of the editorial jobs are said to go to women in the U.S.A. while 28 % of editorial posts in Britain are held by women. However, this general picture is heavily influenced by the very large number of female editorial staff concentrated in traditional women's areas.

In general, women are relegated to areas which are seen as having only marginal importance. The ACTT in Britain found its members working primarily on educational, arts and children's programmes in 1975. In the United States, only about 10 % of news personnel in television and radio stations, for instance, were female in 1974, and most of these were in low-level editorial jobs. In Japan, NHK has recruited no women news reporters for 20 years: women programme-makers (about 1 % of the total production staff) are almost exclusively concerned with children's programmes or programmes dealing with cookery and similar activities.

At the technical level, there is a negligible number of women in any broadcasting or film organization anywhere. This an almost universally male-dominated area. One exception is Finland, where 20 % of all technical staff in the Finnish Broadcasting Company were women in 1978: women accounted for 42 % of film editors and 28% of film supervisors, although only one of the eighty camera operators was female.

The ABC in Australia found that 95% of its technical staff were male, in 1977. In Britain, the ACTT found that less than 10% of its women members were technicians. Even in Sweden, only 9% of women in Sveriges Radio were working in technical areas in 1978. Almost everywhere, women technicians are confined to the very lowest grades.

At the same time, the secretarial and clerical jobs are almost completely filled by women in most broadcasting organizations. In fact, when we talk of "women in the media", we describe for the most part women working as production secretaries, script/continuity staff and clerk-typists.

In Britain, 100% of production secretaries/producers' assistants among ACTT members were female in 1975; in Taiwan, nearly 90% of these staff across all three television networks were women in 1976; all 83 continuity staff in the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation were women in 1978. In the ABC in 1976, 58% of women employees were clerks. Of *all* ACTT women members in Britain, 60% were employed in 1975 as producers' assistants/production secretaries or as continuity personnel.

These facts become particularly important when seen in the context of earning levels and career development. Not only are women's jobs lower-paid than, for instance, the technical jobs dominated by men: they are also "dead-end" jobs, with no obvious line of promotion.

It is difficult to find any hard evidence to support the proposition that the portrayal of women in the media differs when a woman is producing the images. This is partly a consequence of the way in which research in this area has typically been carried out.

A heavy research focus on content analysis means that there have been virtually no attempts to establish links between the dominant images and the dominant values, beliefs or attitudes of media personnel. A few scattered studies have managed to establish that, for instance, the female editors of women's pages are on the whole oriented by the same traditional concerns and priorities as their male counterparts, and that women's judgements about newsworthiness resemble those of men.

Another study, examining the news perceptions of journalism students, found that women students had the same stereotyped picture of women as male students. Although they themselves were interested in politics and not "traditional" women's concerns, they thought that they were unusual and that "ordinary" women were more interested in mundane matters.

It is also true that many instances can be found of individual women producers, journalists or decision-makers being associated with, or directly responsible for, anti-female material. This underlines the simplistic nature of some statements made about media output and male domination.

The fact is that most women and most men *share* common cultural perspectives. The problem is not, therefore, simply to open up media employment to women, but at the same time to work towards changing women's self-perceptions, evolving and directing measures against a cultural value system which at present not only accords women lower status, but also frequently leaves them unaware of the fact.

To date, evidence of the impact of women working within the media, in terms of their producing an output which is qualitatively different, is slight. This has been attributed partly to the decision-making patterns of most media organizations, and their relationship to dominant economic and political institutions, as well as to the existence of established professional practices. Until women constitute a "critical mass" within the media, their ability to work against accepted cultural and professional values will be negligible.

■ **Margaret Gallagher**

Women in Soviet

Photo M. Kuschtareva © APN, Moscow

by Alexander Birman

AMONG the many forms of inequality found in different societies sex discrimination is perhaps one of the most important. From the start, the young Soviet government set itself the goal of eliminating this discrimination and of securing equal rights for women.

Today 51 per cent of the over 110 million factory and office workers in the Soviet Union are women. Women constitute 74 per cent of all teachers, 83 per cent of doctors and health workers, and 84 per cent of the workers employed in the distributive trades.

The figures vary from region to region. In the Russian Federation, for example, women form 53 per cent of the work force, in Tajikistan 39 per cent.

There are no women engaged in mining, the steel industry and other industries entailing hard physical labour, but many in the textile, clothing and instrument making industries. Many work in occupations calling for firmness and persistence, for instance, as geologists or meteorologists.

Enterprises often prefer to take on women rather than men for certain jobs, knowing them to be more efficient and painstaking. We find women working as chief accountants and in charge of chemical and other laboratories. Women judges, lawyers and bank managers are common.

In 1977-78, our higher educational establishments had 5,037,000 students, and 2,568,000 of them (just over half) were women. Here again the pattern is not a uniform one. The lowest proportion of women students is found at agricultural college (35 per cent). The highest is in economics (64 per cent), the arts and medical colleges (57 per cent), and in industrial colleges (40 per cent).

Over the past 25 years women have conquered the citadel of science. In 1950 they accounted for a third of all scientific workers. In 1977 they made up 511,600 (40 per cent) of a total of 1,279,000. More than 2,700 women are Academicians, corresponding members of the Academy or professors, and over 5,000 have D. Sc.'s.

Men and women get equal pay for equal work, and women with young children enjoy special advantages: no night shifts, no obligation to travel because of their work, and so on.

An interesting fact is that while the average lifespan in the USSR is 70, for men it is 64 and for women 74. There is much speculation as to why this should be so. The probable explanation is that more men are engaged in mining, building, driving and other occupations which have a bearing on their lifespan.

Soviet women play an active part in political life, serving on trade union, party and control committees.

One member of the Supreme Soviet in three is a woman and so are half of our local councillors. Women account for between 35 and 44 per cent of higher trade union officials, and for two-thirds of the committee members at factory branch level.

There are many more reasons why we regard women as a cementing force, as one of the pillars of Soviet society. Besides the part she plays in industrial and social life, the woman is a mother, wife, grand-mother, sister or girl-friend and plays a leading part in the upbringing of future citizens.

During the Second World War Soviet women manned the factories, saved the

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Photo © APN, Moscou

Opposite page, USSR flying ace Marina Popovitch is the holder of several world speed and distance aviation records. Above, three generations of Evenski women; the Evenskis, who live in eastern Siberia, form part of the Altaic family of peoples.

lives of the wounded and treated the sick. At the front they fought as pilots and snipers. Thousands were given military decorations, and many the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Soviet women are full-fledged members of society, independent and respected.

In other words, there are no problems? Oh yes, there are!

First, there is the problem of employment as the following figures reveal:

Percentage of women among gainfully employed workers	1940	1977
— In the USSR as a whole	39	51
— In the Russian Federation	41	53
— In Tajikistan (Soviet Central Asia)	29	39

Working women find it difficult to raise several children, and not all want to send them to nurseries. That explains why the practice of home working has become more frequent of late. Enterprises deliver materials and collect the finished goods.

Shorter hours and a shorter working week for women are also being introduced. In the villages, branches of the food industry are being set up to provide occupations for women.

Next there is the problem of job distribution. Though much has been done recently to overcome lop-sided economic development, there are still many predominantly "male" and "female" regions. Women predominate in the textile industry in the central part of the country and in "resort" areas such as the Crimea and the Caucasus, while men predominate in the mining areas of Siberia, the North and Far East.

A third batch of problems might be described as personal and sociological. It hardly needs any profound research to discover that women working the same hours as men get far less time to themselves. It is men who spend most time watching television, going to football matches, fishing and so forth.

The ratio of divorces to marriages has recently doubled, and more divorce proceedings are started by women who are financially independent. I would not put this down entirely to the fact that men do less than their share of the household tasks, but I am sure it is a factor.

To ease the burden of household chores, public amenities are being rapidly expanded. In 1965 there were 193,000 service units employing 1,300,000 people. In 1977 there were 264,000 employing 2 1/2 million, and the services provided have been vastly improved.

There is still a long way to go yet. But we are moving ahead. ■

Breaking the male stranglehold

by Marcia Westkott

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The crusade for women's emancipation has catalyzed a vital intellectual movement which is producing a growing body of literature inspired by a new awareness of woman's experience in the modern age. In the world of education this movement has stimulated the growth of academic interest in the status and problems of women—what has come to be known as "women's studies". In May 1980, as part of its programme for the advancement of women and its activities in connexion with the Decade for Women, Unesco organized a meeting of specialists in women's studies from the different world regions. Articles on the next six pages are based on papers presented to the meeting. That by Lourdes Arizpe on page 34 is adapted from a study prepared for an earlier symposium held in Mexico City under the aegis of the College of Mexico and the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

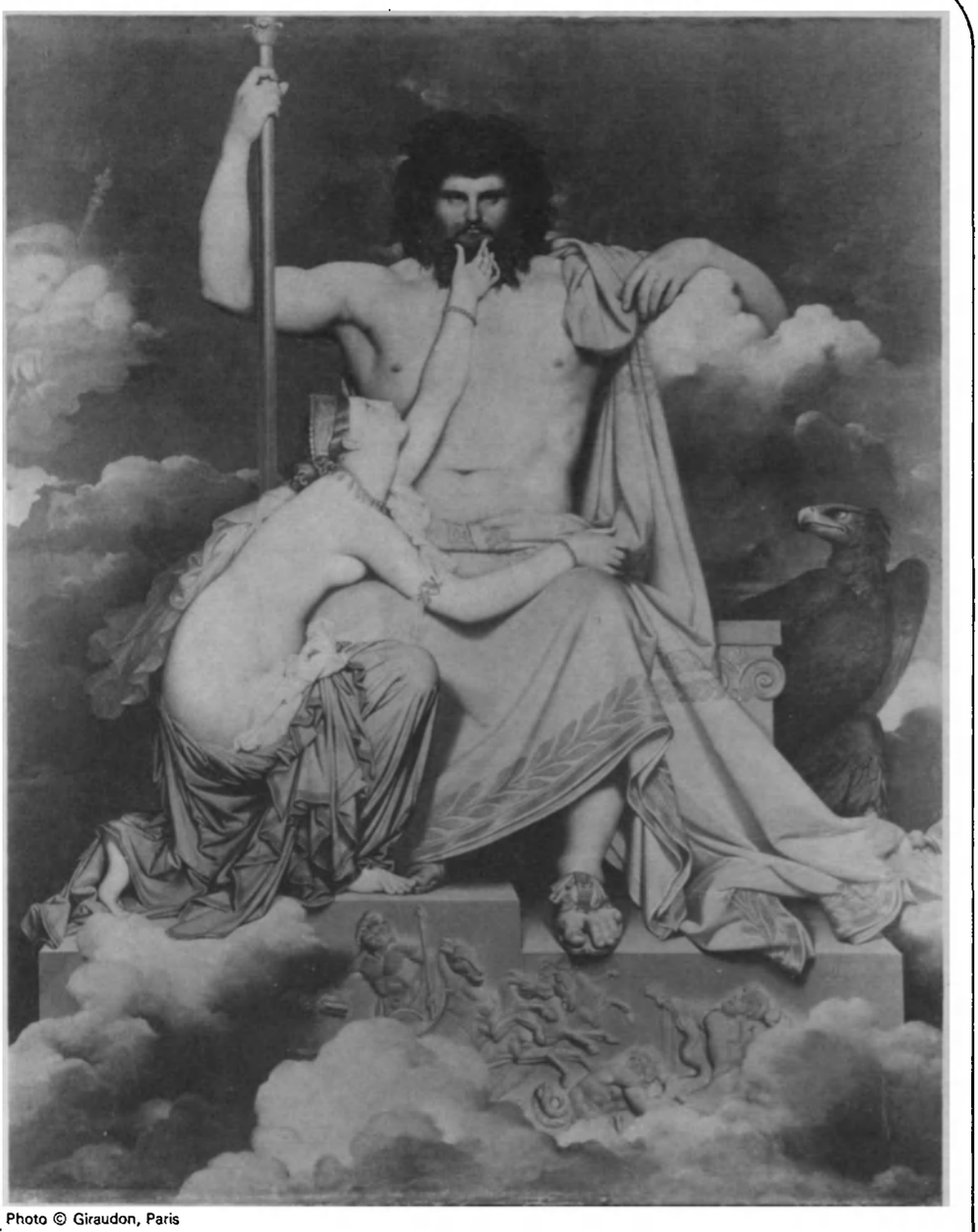

Photo © Giraudon, Paris

"The concept of the human being as a universal category is only man writ large. 'Woman' is considered an abstract deviation of this essential humanity; she is a partial man, or a negative man, or the convenient object of man's needs... A woman is defined exclusively in terms of her relationship to men." Above, Jupiter and Thetis, by the French artist Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, in the Museum of Aix-en-Provence.

"... We exploit ourselves as objects of knowledge..." Above, the Palaeolithic *Venus de Lespugue,* now in the Musée de l'Homme, Paris.

Photo © Musée de l'Homme.

AMONG the major arguments that feminist criticism directs at social science is that it concentrates on the distortion and misinterpretation of women's experience. Women have not only been very largely ignored in traditional approaches to knowledge; where women have been considered at all we have been measured in masculine terms.

The concept of the human being as a universal category is only the man writ large. "Woman" is considered an abstract deviation of this essential humanity; she is a partial man, or a negative image of man, or the convenient object of man's needs. In any case, a woman is defined exclusively in terms of her relationship to men, which becomes the source from which female stereotypes emerge and are sustained.

Moving beyond these stereotypes requires renaming the characteristics of women, not in terms of deviations from or negations of a masculine norm, but as patterns of human responses to particular situations. In this view, masculinity and femininity are simply different human possibilities that have emerged historically. This understanding has led feminist scholars to rethink the concept of the person to include traditionally female characteristics.

Another strand of feminist criticism of the *content* of knowledge about women as defined by the social sciences concerns the assumption that the human being and "his" social environment are mutually compatible. According to this assumption, the personality is formed by and therefore reflects its social contexts. The male character structure and patriarchal culture mutually reflect and support one another through social, political, and economic institutions. For this approach to person and society to remain consistent, women and other deviants must either become invisible or their estrangement from, or failure in, such a society must be explained in terms of their "natural" inferiority.

In calling attention to women's invisibility in social science and in rejecting the notion of women's natural inferiority, feminists have challenged the assumption that self and society are mutually reflective and supportive. Instead, they have stressed the idea that girls and women have grown up and have lived in social contexts that are opposed to their needs as human beings. These social contexts, they argue, are patriarchal: through the organization of social relations, women are controlled by men and are culturally devalued. Whether a woman manages to struggle against this subjugation or succumbs to

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"... Women have become the latest academic fad... we are in the situation of gathering any and all information we can about ourselves so long as it sells..."

Photo © Léon-Claude Vénézia, Paris

it, or more likely both, in a patriarchical culture, she is still an outsider, an other, a marginal person, a deviant. In short she is alienated.

As well as criticizing the *content* of social knowledge about women, many feminists also criticize the *methods* by which this knowledge is obtained. According to this criticism, the patriarchal bias is reflected in the ways in which questions about women are posed: the absence of concepts that tap women's experience, the viewing of women as an unchanging essence independent of time and place, and the narrowness of the concept of the human being reflected in limited ways of understanding human behaviour.

Like the Marxist tradition within which she works, the criticism formulated by the Canadian sociologist, Dorothy Smith, challenges the norm of objectivity that assumes that the subject and object of research can be separated from one another through a methodological screen. The subject-object dichotomy in social science refers to the distinction between the person conducting the research and the person about whom knowledge is being developed. The ideal of objectivity was advocated by nineteenth century positivists who argued that the object of social knowledge should be regarded as any other physical phenomenon and that the subject who conducts research must always be on guard not to let feelings "infect" research.

Smith argues that the methodological norm of objectivity is itself socially and historically constituted, rooted in an ideology that attempts to mystify the social relations of the knower and the known through procedures that appear anonymous and impersonal. This aura of objectivity can be maintained so long as the object of knowledge, the "known", can be an "other", an alien object that does not reflect back on the knower. It is only where women are also brought in as the *subjects* of knowledge that the separation between subject and object breaks down.

This emphasis upon the idea that subject and object are humanly linked converges with the interpretive tradition in the social sciences. The interpretive tradition emphasizes the idea that social knowledge is always interpreted within historical contexts, and that truths are, therefore, historical rather than abstract, and contingent rather than categorical. The questions that the investigator asks of the object of knowledge grow out of her own concerns and experiences. The answers that she may discover emerge not only from the ways that the objects of knowledge confirm and expand these experiences, but also from the ways that they oppose or remain silent about them.

The third criticism that feminist scholars direct against traditional social science is concerned with the *purpose* of the social knowledge of women. It certainly takes no more than a modicum of perception to realize that women have become the latest academic fad. As objects of knowledge, women have become marketable commodities measured by increasing profits for publishers and expanding enrolments in women's studies courses. While women are riding the crest of the wave which we ourselves have helped to create, it may be a rather sobering, albeit necessary, task to reflect on the ephemeral nature of the academic market in which we are now valued.

In this respect we have much to learn from the academic social science exploitation of the poor, especially the Blacks, in the sixties. In the name of academic liberal concern and compensation the black ghetto was measured, analysed, processed, dissected—in short, reduced to manipulable data that advanced the career interests of the investigators but did little to improve the plight of the investigated.

The fact that research on the black ghetto is now *passé,* although black ghettos continue to exist, and research on women is now *au courant,* should give us pause. Once women have had "their day", once the academic market has grown tired of this particular "area", once the journals are glutted with information about women, how then shall we justify the importance of studying women? Shall knowledge of women also recede in the shadow of benign neglect?

The issue here concerns the exploitation of women as objects of knowledge. So long as we endorse the idea that the purpose of the study of women is justified solely in terms of our past exclusion as objects of knowledge, we inadvertently contribute to this exploitation as well as to its faddish nature.

Women are an attractive subject to exploit so long as we hold that the purpose of social knowledge is simply getting more information. In social science's unrestrained pursuit of information, any new object of study that can generate mounds of data is of interest so long as it is a prolific source. When the data are no longer new, the object of study loses its primacy.

Along with this flimsy market valuation of content is the problem of simply recording the present or past conditions of women. The methodological approach which recognizes as valid only the factual recording of what is allows no justification for attending to alternatives to present conditions. The effect of this approach is to justify the present.

Opposed to this social science *about* women is an alternative social science *for* women. A social science for women does not exclude information about women, but informs the knowledge it seeks with an intention for the future rather than a resignation to the present. This dialogue with a future suggests a social science that is not simply a doleful catalogue of the facts of patriarchy, but an opposition to the very facts that it discovers.

The opposition to patriarchal domination within both subject and object, knower and known, is a profound expression of a longing for freedom from that domination. For those of us who are seeking knowledge of women, this idea of freedom can be expressed as a future intention which indicates to us which facts in the present are necessary to know. Without this sense of what knowledge is important for our liberation, we are in the situation of gathering any and all information we can about ourselves so long as it sells, and thus we exploit ourselves as objects of knowledge.

The difference between a social science about women and a social science for women, between the possibilities of self-exploitation and those of liberation, is our imaginative capacity to imbue our understandings of the world with a commitment to overcoming the subordination and devaluation of women.

The feminist criticisms of social science content, method, and purpose are not tightly integrated into an academic discipline. They are, rather, strands that are just beginning to emerge. As a result, women's actions are being reinterpreted and profoundly illuminated from the perspective of women's consciousness. Social institutions such as motherhood are being re-examined for their patriarchal assumptions and are being countered with a vision of decent and humane parenting.

A psychology of women emphasizes its intention to be *for* women by not only explaining the conditions that affect the psychology of women and men, but also by exploring the bases from which those conditions can be transformed. To attend to the feminist criticism is to open the social sciences to both the feminist challenge and its hope.

■ **Marcia Westkott**

THE WEAKER SEX

Cartoon © Women's Program, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Africa: a new look from the inside

by Zenebework Tadesse

"Africa and Africans have historically been the object of research by non-Africans. This historical reality is much more true concerning research on women in Africa." The authors of these research studies have often adopted a "tourist" approach to the women of Africa, seeing their physical characteristics, their costumes and their customs, not in terms of the individual, but as an expression of the exotic folklore of an entire ethnic group. Left, a tourist and a Masai woman at a designated "tourist village" in Kenya.

Photo Margaret Murray, UNDP

TO focus on the question of research on women in Africa is at once to point to the vast potential it has and the constraints it now faces. Globally, the struggle against the subordination of women has taken a multiplicity of forms. One of them is to suspect and query all hitherto standard and accepted conventional wisdom, posing new questions and constantly examining even those assumptions that might have resulted from the struggles against the subordination of women and portrayed as beneficial to women. In line with that tradition, one ought to start by asking what is research on African women? Who carries out this research? What purpose does this research or lack of it serve?

Research strictly defined in the academic sense as the production of scientific knowledge is a relatively new and peripheral discipline in Africa. I am thinking here of research as a full time and a major form of preoccupation by Africans. For Africa and Africans have historically been the object of research by non-Africans. This historical reality is much more true concerning research on women in Africa.

Political independence and the crisis of conventional development theory have led to the creation of more local research institutes, recruiting of local researchers and defining research priorities in accordance with what are considered to be local needs. However, even today, only a handful of local women researchers have joined these research institutes and problems specific to women have not been seriously included in the long list of research priorities.

There is a wide difference between research concerns, topical, conceptual and methodological choices by external researchers and local researchers. In most cases "research" is limited to "action-oriented research", i.e. areas considered to be of primary concern to women, such as Home Economics. "Outside" research tends to focus on discipline-tied topics, topics that are trendy in the West or appropriate case studies to prove a point in a particular ongoing debate in the West.

The largest portion of social science research carried out on women in Africa is by anthropologists. Books and articles that came out in the decade 1960-1970 were mostly descriptive and focused on women in relation to kinship, types of marriage, systems of inheritance and types of production. Currently, and as a result of the feminist movement, anthropologists, mostly women, have begun to expose androcentrism in existing data, and, informed by a feminist perspective, to generate and reinterpret ethnographic data that directly and indirectly relate to the status of women in society.

A large number of articles, conference papers and textbooks have been concerned by the tendency, commonly known as "male bias" in anthropology and the other social sciences. The current debate revolves around the controversy about sociological versus biological determinants of gender roles. The questions that most writers raise seem to be: is male dominance universal? Was there a primitive matriarchy and what cross-culturally accounts for variations in women's status? There is no consensus on the critical issue of the universality of female subordination although most anthropological works by women and men assume some measure of subordination for all human society past and present.

In spite of these differences in approach, long-standing male-biased assumptions have been challenged. Most writings have convincingly demonstrated that there is no inherent natural connexion between biologically determined sex differences and sexual hierarchies. More importantly these studies have argued that what has been taken to be natural and given is historically variable and changeable.

The issue of power relations is the point of focus in the discussion and revolves around the control of production and distribution of

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economic resources, rights to participate in or lead political, religious activities, and autonomy regarding decisions about sex, marriage, residence, divorce and children's lives.

Challenging previous assumptions these studies demonstrated that the argument that women in hunting-gathering societies were dominated by aggressive males, thus setting patterns for contemporary sex roles, was false. Women participated in public decision-making in an egalitarian society in accord with their control over the products of their labour. Their declining status accompanied the privatization of their labour. Reinterpreting the relationship of symbolism to that of women's status, spirit possessions are believed to be thinly disguised protest movements, that served as anti-male outlets and provided small numbers of women with long-term positions of high status. Food taboos reflect the symbolic expression of sexual inequality as manifested by food prohibition and male control of the forces of production.

Those who posit universal subordination of women mainly attribute it to the indirect result of child-bearing and child-rearing under conditions of limited technology. Another side argues that child-bearing and child-rearing did not prevent women from furnishing the majority of foodstuffs among hunter-gatherers and "simple" horticulturalists and hence women's autonomy was undercut and transformed due to colonialism and missionary influences. Another trend within the group argues for "complementary but equal" status.

Women are to be valued for themselves and the contributions they make to society. They are neither inferior nor superior to men, merely different, and the ways women feel about themselves are the prime determinants of women's experience. Recent debates focus on analysing the division of labour, marriage relationships and supporting male-oriented ideology as fundamental in reproducing the subordination of women.

Sociological studies on African women show similar trends to the anthropological ones. From being merely descriptive, they have gone on to become slightly analytical and more critical of sexist assumptions. Topics covered by sociological studies include social change and its impact on the family, marriage and divorce, socialization, education, migration, prostitution, occupational choice and occupational mobility.

Economists focus on gainful employment, salary differentials and occupational segregation. This type of research is at its nascent stage quantitative and confirms the universal pattern of women's concentration in the tertiary sector. Numerous studies have documented women's participation in the "informal labour sector". In spite of this special emphasis, much research cuts across fields and variables.

The interdisciplinary nature of studies on African women in the 1970s is best exemplified by the type of research which has come to be known as "Women and Development". While the details vary, the main theme of these studies is that structural and historical processes have eroded women's power in men's favour. These processes include the territorial displacement of women through marriage from one group to another, religion, colonization, capitalism and migration. Processes such as industrialization, modernization and development, with their components of knowledge, new skills, professions and resultant rewards are only accessible to men. Thus the transformation of traditional economic organization has resulted in an increased dichotomization of sex roles and concomitant sexual inequalities.

In a review of a book entitled, *Women and World Development* Ester Boserup wrote:

"It is a central theme in many of the papers that development had a negative impact on women because foreign experts failed to understand the position of women in traditional societies. Therefore women have only rarely been involved in the development process, be it as participants or as beneficiaries. The experts failed to assign any roles for women in programmes of training for agricultural modernization and in other development projects. This was probably due to the experts' lack of awareness of the important contribution which women are making in most traditional societies, especially in rural areas."

■ **Zenebework Tadesse**

Photo © Eva Bauer-Völkel, UN/FIAP international photo competition

"Most social science research on women in Africa has been carried out by anthropologists... Currently, and as a result of the feminist movement, anthropologists, mostly women, have begun to expose androcentrism in existing data and... to generate and reinterpret ethnographic data that directly and indirectly relate to the status of women in society." Above, a Touareg family in the Algerian Sahara.

Asia: a kaleidoscope of cultures

by Leela Dube

STUDIES of women in Asia and of programmes aimed at elevating women's status have been handicapped by a general lack of understanding of cross-cultural and intra-cultural variations in the basic organization of societies and in the life contexts of women.

Superficially similar situations may have radically different explanations and cannot be treated as identical. For example, the low levels of literacy and education among females, the acceptance of lower wages by women and the consequent preference of employers for female labour, and the over-burdening with work of many women appear to be common features of the condition of women in many Asian countries. But the forces that bring these features into being are not the same in each country.

With regard to the quality of relations between men and women, for example, Asia can be divided into three regions—South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia. In Southeast Asia, while familial control over unmarried daughters may be fairly strict in Islamic countries, women generally have a freedom of action and decision not found in South and East Asia. While there are some patrilineal groups and also a few matrilineal groups, the predominant pattern of kinship in Southeast Asia is bilateral, with right of inheritance for women, relative flexibility of marital residence and considerable interdependence between mothers and daughters. Another notable feature of the societies in Southeast Asia is that their women do not practice seclusion (Purdah) and, by and large, are not constrained by a rigid segregation of the sexes.

The use of Western concepts and methodology has been most pronounced in studies on the Philippines. The emphasis that some research has given to sex-role differentiation and inequality of status does not represent real conditions. In many situations, class and economic differences are more significant than sex-based ones. Women may have an egalitarian relationship with menfolk within the family and in kinship networks and close social circles and yet may be objects of exploitation in the outside world.

The interpretation and explanation of research data and statistics may vary with the different methods used. Pre-determined categories and equations as well as the use of hastily adopted common denominators often distort the data and detach analysis from the living contexts.

An apparent comparability of numbers does not necessarily indicate the existence of similar social patterns or conditions. For instance, the drop-out rate of schoolgirls in Thailand does not have the same explanation as the drop-out rate for the same groups in India or Afghanistan.

Although in almost all countries certain categories of jobs are considered specifically "masculine" and others specifically "feminine", the kind of work reserved for men and for women varies from culture to culture. For example, whereas in many countries building and construction are exclusive to men and secretarial work is largely reserved for women, in India women are often to be seen at work on building sites and shorthand and typing is a major form of employment for men. Also in India, where pre-industrial spinning and weaving were originally male tasks, the textile and clothing industries have a large male labour force, in contrast to the situation in western Europe where the textile and clothing work force is predominantly female. Social indicators concerning the participation of women in the labour force have, therefore, to be interpreted with caution and are meaningless if not related to the cultural context to which they refer.

Photo Rune Hassner © G. Bern, Paris

The segregation and vigilance imposed on girls in India and Afghanistan which are responsible for sexual disparities in school enrolment and a high drop-out rate among girls are not a feature of Thai society. Nor does the unequal allocation of scarce resources have the same impact for Thai girls. Instead the pattern of life, in which women have considerable rights but need to shoulder far greater responsibility than men, has more relevance.

In demographic comparisons of female infant mortality Indonesia fares worse than India; but in Indonesia infant mortality is higher among males than among females. It would therefore be misleading to compare female infant mortality in India with that in Indonesia without reference to male infant mortality in the two countries.

A great deal of socio-cultural and historical data on Asian countries has been provided by foreign scholars. But this information needs to be carefully evaluated and the gaps in research filled. There is a need for new data on the status of women to be collected and for comparative studies within individual countries as well as between different countries to be planned. ■

LEELA DUBE *is director of the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research and president of the commission on women of the International Union for Anthropological and Ethnological Studies. A fuller treatment of the subject of the present article will be published by Unesco's Office of the Regional Adviser for the Social Sciences in Asia and Oceania, Bangkok.*

Latin America: a twofold servitude?

by Lourdes Arizpe

ANY social change, any evolution in established ways of thinking, brings its attendant dangers. The past refuses to die and intermingles with the present.

We Latin Americans possess what the Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) called, in connexion with Spanish culture, "the tragic sense of life". For a woman life is "a vale of tears", a tragedy which can only be coped with if it is stoically accepted. Anyone who needs convincing of this has only to listen to the peasant women of Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala, or the women of the shanty-towns and tenements of Caracas, Monterrey and Rio. For them, life on earth is a matter of husband, children, pain and suffering; everything happens because it is "God's will". They have every reason to think like this, since they possess no powers of decision over their bodies, over their lives, over the lives of their children and husbands, and over their community. Fatalism and lamentation go hand in hand.

According to another analysis, Latin America suffers from the effects of an economic and social system in which it is bound, on unequal terms, to the great industrialized centres; meanwhile, this state of dependence is exacerbated by the persistence of class interests and internal ideological pressures. It would be wrong to say that women's role in this process has been a marginal one; on the contrary, it is their essential (though invisible) contribution to the economy, their political passivity and their attitude of extreme resignation which allow the situation to continue. And certain interests would like to preserve the advantages which clearly stem from the exploitation and oppression of women.

Our struggle has a single goal: to establish societies based neither on injustice nor on exploitation. In dependent market economies which create a pool of surplus labour, the occupational structure is such that no salaried employment can be provided for women. Consequently, governments seek to encourage big families even if this means a drop in living standards, with more people depending on a single breadwinner. The woman's unpaid housework makes up for the man's low wages. When even this arrangement is inadequate for the maintenance of the family unit, the woman carries out a "double work-day", usually finding ill-paid and unproductive casual work.

At this point the discussion about the family becomes more complex. Can we really destroy the family? Even in a socialist society like that of Cuba, productive forces have not yet developed to the stage which would permit the complete socialization of household work. The first question to be asked is whether the double work-day in the socialist countries (and in such countries as the United States where more and more women are in paid employment) is an improvement or a twofold servitude. In our countries, the fact that women remain within the family sphere mitigates the very high levels of visible unemployment and underemployment, but at what psychological cost? Is the price not male chauvinism and its female counterpart, in other words a man who needs to feel he dominates the situation in face of a woman who will do all in her power not to lose him, since without him she could not survive economically?

At the same time we need to analyse why Latin American women feel less urgency than their European and North American sisters when it comes to fighting for their emancipation. A key factor which has been insufficiently studied is the existence of a pool of cheap domestic labour which frees middle class women from the double work-day and from the onus of looking after their children. I also believe that another element in the situation is the fact that Catholic Latin culture apportions to women two major spheres of influence, the family and the Church, in which they compensate for their marginal position in political life. If this analysis is correct, the feminists' insistence on giving women control over their body (by limiting the birth-rate through contraception and abortion) and their critique of the family would actually militate against the power of women in Latin America. Seen from this standpoint, feminism would weaken the position of women instead of liberating them, confirming the belief of some Marxists that feminism is a strategy of advanced capitalism designed to liberate working men and women from family tasks.

If these processes are inevitable, it follows that instead of vainly trying to hang on to privileges which history has accorded them and is now taking away, Latin American women should not fear change but should devise strategies which would enable them to find new ways to participate in the political and economic life of tomorrow's societies. And so it is vital for them to understand the experiences of women both in the capitalist industrialized countries and in the socialist countries. It is wrong to think that the conditions in which these women live are of no concern to us. They do concern us because they hold out the hope of possible alternatives for the future. We possess the great historic opportunity of being able to anticipate these changes and to channel them for our own benefit and for the benefit of our society. ■

Photo © Ken Heyman, New York

"For Latin American women life is 'a vale of tears'... a matter of husband, children, pain and suffering; everything happens because it is 'God's will'. They have every reason to think like this since they possess no powers of decision over their bodies, over their lives, over the lives of their children and husbands, and over their community. Fatalism and lamentation go hand in hand."

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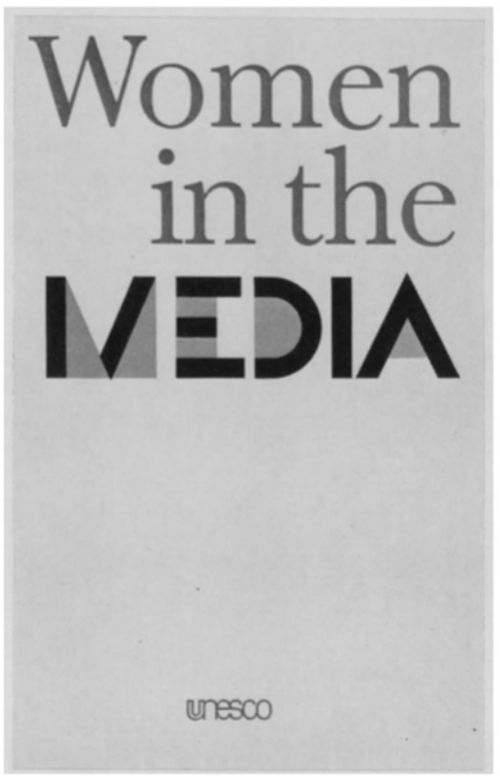

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Through women's eye

Women on every continent are today joining in a dynamic movement of study and research seeking to identify the obstacles to their full participation, on equal terms with men, in the life and welfare of the communities to which they belong. Thanks to this movement the real importance of women's economic role is now beginning to be recognized. Photo shows a Peruvian Indian woman of the Andes.